

February 24, 2019

Mary and Pilate

Luke 1:46-55

1:46 And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord,

1:47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

1:48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold,
from now on all generations will call me blessed;

1:49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his
name.

1:50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to
generation.

1:51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud
in the thoughts of their hearts;

1:52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted
those of humble estate;

1:53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has
sent away empty.

1:54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

1:55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring
forever.”

1. Historical Faith

Apostles’ Creed has the names of two people besides Jesus Christ. They are Mary the Mother of Jesus and Pontius Pilate, a Roman governor. Since the name of Mother Mary is the name that has been loved after the name of Jesus, it is no wonder the name is in the words of confession of faith, but Pontius Pilate is a person to crucify Jesus, and behind him there was a Roman emperor who were persecuting Christians at that time. Nevertheless, why was that name left in the

Apostles' Creed?

It was to express that the Cross of Jesus Christ is a fact of history. Faith that the Bible teaches and Christians believe is called the "historical faith." The "historical faith" means that the faith, is not based on myths, legends, or philosophical theories, but based on historical facts.

Previously, when the Korean drama "Winter Sonata" became popular in Japan, many people from Japan visited places where drama location shooting was done. It seems that everyone was touched just by passing by bus where the main character was encountered in a traffic accident. But that is about the story, not an actual event. In Atami of Japan there is the "statue of Kanichi and Omiya." Kanichi and Omiya are not the real people, but the characters of "*Konjiki Yasha*" written by Ozaki Kayo in the Meiji era. Moreover, this statue was made in 1986, about 90 years after the novel was written. But the Bible is not a novel, it is a record of history, and Jesus Christ is a real person. If not, the pilgrim of Israel by Christians becomes the same as the tour of the "Winter Sonata," and the Cross which is looked up by Christians is supposed to be the same as the statue of Kanichi and Omiya.

However, the Bible clearly states that the birth of Jesus Christ, his life, the Cross, and the Resurrection are the facts of history. It has not written what day and month the birth of Jesus was, but Luke 2:1-2 says, "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria." It turns out that the year when Jesus was born is 4 years BC. Luke 3:1-2 says, "In the fifteenth year of the

reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness,” and the year when John the Baptist started was the year 25 AD. Jesus started his ministry a little after John the Baptist began his activities. It was the 27th AD. Jesus was crucified at the Passover Feast after the ministry of three years, so that the cross of Jesus is Spring of the 30th AD. Jesus resurrected on the third day from the cross and returned to heaven on the 40th day after the Resurrection. Then in the next ten days the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples and the church began in Jerusalem. Pilate was the governor of Judea in the ten years from AD 26 to 36, and his term of office is overlapped with the time of Jesus’ public life and the birth of the church.

The apostle Paul wrote to Corinthians like this. “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-5) Paul says that the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus are the facts of faith. That was not about the story, it actually happened in history. Paul was originally Jewish leader, who persecuted the newly occurring church. He was a very learned man and a theorist. He worked all of his knowledge and logic and began to have the belief that “Jesus can not be Christ.” However, when he met Jesus who was resurrected and living, his belief collapsed. Before the fact that “Christ

died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,” “was buried”, “was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” Neither theory nor belief was helpful. Paul was a man living on the same land in the same time as Jesus, so he was able to ascertain the fact of the Cross and Resurrection directly with his eyes. And he checked the facts and had faith based on that fact.

Paul also says, “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:12) Paul declares that if there is no resurrection, the faith of the Christians who believe in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ will become false and to be empty. He asserts that a human desire or a man-made story of the resurrection won't save us, even we strongly hope the resurrection, saying, “I wish there should be a resurrection,” or making a story of the resurrection, saying “I believe the resurrection even it did not happen.” If there were no resurrection, why did Christians keep faith through betting their lives? Best life should be looking for fun in our lives, like people say, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” (1 Corinthians 15:32)

But in fact, Jesus who died on the cross resurrected on the third day. It was not about the world of story, it was a historical event that occurred during the period when Judea was under the rule of the Roman Empire Tiberius who appointed Pontius Pilate as Governor of the Jews. God chose the period of human history, and accomplished the task of saving mankind. So, Apostles' Creed says, “Our Lord

suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.” And it expresses faith based on the facts of history. Every time I confess the Apostles’ Creed, I am pleased and grateful that God has accomplished the work of salvation in history.

2. Salvation for the Weak

The Apostles’ Creed raises another name, Mary. Mary and Pilate are very contrasting. Pilate is a man, and Maria is a woman. Pilate is a Roman, and Maria is a Jew. Pilate was a powerful man, and Maria was a very ordinary girl who lives in the countryside of Nazareth. But God chose Mary and brought forth the Savior to the world, and Pilate became the one who caused the Savior to die. Maria has become a “Favored one” (Luke 1: 28) or “Blessed one” (Luke 1: 42, 45, 48). When Pilate mistakenly killed a large number of Samaritans and was recalled by Samaritans to his boss, Syrian governor. Pilate returned to Rome to explain to the Emperor, but Emperor Tiberius has already passed away. Pilate was deported by Caligula, the successor of Tiberius. A historian wrote that Pilate committed suicide in the exiled land. A “complete reversal” happened. The powerful people perished, and powerless people was saved.

This “complete reversal” is sung wonderfully in the “Song of Mary”. Mary went to her aunt Elisabeth’s house to serve her. Young Mary first greet to her older aunt. However, Elizabeth suddenly said to Mary, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1: 42-43) Elizabeth called Mary the

“Mother of the Lord” and was standing beneath the young girl. “Complete reversal” happened in the family relationship.

However, even though Mary was called the “Mother of the Lord” by Elizabeth, she was not conceited. Mary humbled herself in front of God and Elizabeth, glorifying God, saying, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.” There is a meaning “to enlarge” in her words; “My soul magnifies the Lord.” The magnifying glass is able to show things in large size. Mary blesses God and his glory as infinitely big. But this does not mean magnify a small glory of God. God’s glory is large enough to see. But humans always show themselves bigger making God’s glory small. But Mary made herself smaller calling herself a “humble servant.” Magnify the glory of God as it is, and make ourselves smaller. Here is the true praise to God. There is a real way to live for the believers.

And, Mary is not over by just making herself smaller. She said, “For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed.” (verse 48) She was obediently pleased with the happiness and blessing given by God. Wee need together with a humiliating prayer; “Have mercy on me a sinner” and a rejoice that “our names are written in heaven.” (Luke 10: 20), and thanking for being the hair of God’s Kingdom. (Colossians 1:12).

Mary has drawn the salvation of God like this. “He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.” (52, 53) Judgment comes with God’s salvation. Because those who afflict people should be judged in order that those

who are suffered will be saved. God withdraws power from those who afflict people and raises those who have been afflicted by power. God challenges wealthy people who monopolize wealth and even food from the poor without giving anything and filling the poor and hungry people. This “complete reversal” is the salvation.

This salvation that Mary sang was later told by Jesus. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” (Matthew 5:3-6) The eternal kingdom is for the poor, the unchanging comfort for the sorrowful, the land for the meek, the righteousness of God for those who are deprived of the rights, suffering unfairness, and seek God’s right judgment only as a reliance.

Jesus became poor, sorrowful, meek, starved and thirst for righteousness in order to realize this “complete reversal”. The Son of God became a man, the Holy One became a sinner, and the Lord of life died on the Cross. Every time I recite, “Our Lord, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,” I see the difference between those who admit that they are small and weak and trust in God as typified by Mary and those who rely on their own power and not looking for God represented by Pilate. And I believe that those who live as they ask for their own power seem to prosper now, but eventually the people who fear and respect God will see the glory of God. Then I was given the heart of thanksgiving.

The true believers have this gratitude. Those who are saved by God have experienced that God has solved problems that they could not do

with their own power. Many of the problems are out of ourselves, but we experienced that we have been changed by the power of God though we were powerless for changing ourselves. We have testimonies that we can say, “For he who is mighty has done great things for me.” (verse 49). God is “mighty.” Even if you boast your strength before him, it is just a blank. The person who is arrogant in front of God will be lowered by the great power of God and the person will become acquainted with the fact that God is “the mighty One.” But those who humbly acknowledge their own weaknesses and become humble before God will learn that God is “the mighty One” to save, lift and fill us. And we will praise God.

What problem are you having now? What kind of part are you struggling to change yourself? Are you become impatient because the problem is not solved, and you can not change yourself? Have you stopped asking God and close in the smallness and weakness of yourself? Let’s remember that God is “the mighty One” who looked over Mary instead of Pilate. Believe that God filled with might and mercy. He will make a great work despite our smallness. He will do powerful works regardless of our weakness. Let’s trust in God.

(Prayer)

God, Almighty Father, regardless of our weakness and smallness, you have done a mighty and great things. We also say, “For he who is mighty has done great things for me.” and were glad of our happiness and I exalt you. Show us your powerful works. Help us to demonstrate how “powerful” you are by your works. We pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.