

마태복음 Matthew 18: 19-20

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. (NRSV)

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Korean American Ministries 701 S. Columbia Dr. P.O. Box 520 Decatur, Georgia 30031 www.webkam.org Eun Chul Kim, Ph. D. Drew University, Madison, NJ, 2001

Summary

"What were characteristics and issues of preaching in the newly established Korean Protestant Church?" This is the primary question Dr. Eun Chul Kim seeks to answer in his dissertation, *Preaching in the Korean Protestant Church (1884-1945): A Study in Light of John Calvin's Understanding of Word and Sacrament.* From his perspective, to study Korean preaching from the beginning of Protestant mission in Korea in 1884 to the end of Japanese invasion in 1945 is crucial because "Korean preaching in the period from 1884 to 1945 greatly influenced and shaped contemporary Korean preaching." During the Korean War (19501953) many Korean churches were destroyed, and postwar Korean preaching basically followed what early Korean preachers did. To find features of Korean preaching between 1884 and 1945 and to present new directions for Korean preaching, the author investigates sermons of early missionaries to Korea and Korean preachers between 1884 and 1945 and analyzes them through a theological lens: Calvin's understanding of word and sacrament.

In part 1, Dr. Kim shows the background of Korean preaching through historical investigation. Before Christianity came into Korea, there were three dominant religious traditions in Korea: shamanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Each of them influenced Korean preaching in its own way. An emphasis on healing, charismatic impulse, material blessing, and ecstatic experience are features of Korean preaching influenced by Shamanism. The frequent exposition of a given text by the preacher is a feature influenced by Buddhist lecture, or 'kang-ron.' An authoritative view of the preacher and the imperative mode of preaching are Confucianism's influence.

In this non-Christian context of Korea, a revivalistic style dominated Korean preaching because the primary aim of early Korean preaching was to evangelize people. This revivalistic style of preaching, emphasizing the mystical presentation of the Holy Spirit, has become the nominal pattern of Korean preaching. Especially after Japan defeated China in the Sino-Japanese war on Korean soil in 1894 and killed the Korean queen 'Min-bi' to take over Korea, Koreans began to have a positive attitude toward Western civilization and Protestant missionaries, because they wanted to have national security and strength by seeking the help of Western countries. People accepted Christianity through huge revival meetings, and churches began to grow rapidly. After Japan took over Korea in 1910, more people came to the Church to find hope. Because there were not enough ordained pastors for the rapidly growing Korean Church, preaching became the center of liturgy, while the Eucharist was hardly observed. Through the "Great Awakening" of Pyung-yang especially, which took place in 1907, Korean preaching strengthened its revivalistic, Pentecostal, and evangelical nature. Even after Japan began to persecute the Korean church severely because of its nationalistic impulse and its rejection of Shinto worship honoring the ancestors of the Japanese Emperor, preaching still played a central role in worship as a medium giving Koreans hope for the liberation of the nation.

In part 2, Dr. Kim first studies the preaching of early Western missionaries to Korea, because their forms of preaching greatly influenced early Korean preachers. Early Protestant missionaries to Korea such as Horace G. Underwood and Henry G. Appenzeller were greatly influenced by the Second Great Awakening of the 19th century in the United States. Therefore, their preaching was evangelistic and moralistic in its nature, and its style was the topical sermon which makes simple biblical points such as salvation, repentance, and morality. The main topic of their preaching was Jesus Christ. But they so greatly emphasized Jesus Christ that they often missed the main point of the text that they preached.

The second object of Dr. Kim's study is early Korean preaching. There are three periods in the development of Korean preaching. The first period was from 1884 to 1919, up to the year of the Independence March. A prominent preacher of this time was Seon-Joo Kihl whose preaching was evangelical, fundamental, and moralistic. He first started audible prayer [Tongsung Kido] and dawn prayer [Saebyuk Kido] in the Korean Church. His favorite book in the Bible was the Revelation and the main topic of his preaching was eschatology. The second

period was between 1920 and 1930. Korean churches grew greatly and were stabilized. Two preachers led the growth of the Korean Church in this period: Ik-Doo Kim and Sung-Bong Lee. Ik-Doo Kim's sermons focused on worldly blessings and happiness, and in his revival meetings miraculous healing often took place. Unlike the majority of preachers of his time, Sung-Bong Lee's sermons mainly focused on repentance. The third period was between 1930 and 1945. During this period, Japan severely persecuted Korean churches. The well-known preachers of this period were Yong-Do Lee and Ki-Cheol Chu. Yong-Do Lee spoke fast but sincerely, often with tears, while preaching without a manuscript, relying upon the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Unlike other revival preachers of his time, his sermons were full of metaphors and imagery describing Jesus as husband, wife or lover. The central message of Ki-Cheol Chu is the suffering of a Christian. He pointed out faults of Japan, rejected Shinto worship, and was finally martyred brutally by the Japanese.

In order to broaden his understanding of Korean preaching, Dr. Kim researched the theology of Korean preaching between 1884 and 1945. The first distinctive characteristic of the sermons of the leading preachers in this period is a Christocentric focus. They preached what Jesus did, although they often missed the main point of the text. The second characteristic is the emphasis on repentance and conversion, because their primary concern was to convert Koreans affiliated with heathen religious traditions to Christianity. Like revival meetings, there was a moment of raising one's hand as a sign of conversion and a moment of prayer by the preacher for the new converts in worship services. The third characteristic is the emphasis on commitment and prosperity. The commitment that preachers asked for in the beginning of the 19th century was a commitment to Christ instead of heathen religious traditions. But after Japanese persecution became severe in the 1930's, themes of discipline, martyrdom, and heavenly blessing became dominant. The fourth characteristic is the emphasis on the Spirit, because under the influence of Shamanism, the sign of a good sermon was the presence of the Spirit. The fifth characteristic is the emphasis on moral perfection. Because of the influence of Confucianism centered on moral virtue, preachers were considered authoritative moral teachers before the congregation. The sixth characteristic is the emphasis on suffering and eschatology. Under the persecution of the Japanese, the Korean Church participated in the suffering of Christ, and the message of hope became dominant.

With respect to the tone and delivery, the tone of preaching was oratorical and judgmental. During the downfall of the nation, preachers shouted hope with an elevated tone, as African American preachers did in the time of slavery. The majority of Korean sermons were topical, point-making sermons which provided lessons, especially moral lessons, rather than revealing the Biblical text. Furthermore, because the nation's and church's fate were at stake, preaching the lectionary was not possible. Texts giving hope were often chosen and preached.

After finishing his historical review of Korean preaching, Dr. Kim presents his critical reflection on Korean preaching. According to Dr. Kim, although Korean preaching of this era sought to separate Christians from traditional Korean religions, it was appropriated to legalistic and hierarchical Korean culture. Korean preaching lacked exegesis, because preachers often did not have enough education or enough time for sermon preparation, mainly due to everyday Dawn Prayer [Saebyuk Kido]. They were fundamentalists theologically, as the missionaries were, and listeners were encouraged to accept rather than criticize the word of preachers.

In part 3, Dr. Kim presents John Calvin's understanding of word and sacrament. In the Middle Ages, preaching was merely considered a means of teaching and preparing people to receive the Eucharist, while the Eucharist was considered a means of grace that had saving power. However, Calvin thought that the Sacrament is a sign which is not able to bring—but only to announce—the grace of Christ. For him, Christ is present in the Eucharist not physically, but spiritually through the Holy Spirit. The one who gives grace is not the bread and wine but the Holy Spirit. The bread and wine are only signs.

Likewise, the preached word is also a sacramental sign. Preaching presents Christ, and through the work of the Holy Spirit hearers can see and hear Christ as if they confronted him directly. For Calvin, the Word and the sacrament cannot be separated, because first, the Word signifies signs, second, the author of both is the same—God, and third, we have received both from Christ. However, without the work of the Holy Spirit giving faith to one's heart, the Word and sacrament are mere signs. Only when we receive the Word and the Eucharist in faith do they become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. That is why Calvin strongly invoked the presence of the Holy Spirit through Epiclesis in his Genevan liturgy.

Therefore, for Calvin, preaching is a sacramental/divine act that occurs by the Holy Spirit. It is a revelation and a mystery, because people cannot see God fully but only glimpse

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Him through the Word. Furthermore, for Calvin, preaching is a congregational event, because both the preacher and congregation participate in the audible sacrament and are blessed. Preaching is also a teaching event, because it is an act of pastor or minister who is called to teach what they have received. It is a cooperative activity occurring in the context of the church to edify the Church and reveal Christ.

Finally, in part 4, Dr. Kim critically reflects Korean preaching in light of Calvin's preaching. With its dominant, topical, point-making style, Korean preaching tended to impose lessons from the Bible rather than invite people to encounter Christ. In contrast, Calvin's preaching puts the preacher as well as the congregation at a humble position. By allowing them to realize that they are unworthy sinners, Calvin's preaching prepares them to wait for the help of the Holy Spirit, which enables them to understand the divine word. Furthermore, Calvin's preaching is a presentation of Biblical exposition rather than of the preacher's agenda, which we often see in Korean preaching. Because the preacher says what the text says, it is only the Holy Spirit's task to reveal the risen Christ, as it does in the Eucharist. Although Korean preaching often emphasizes the visible signs of the Holy Spirit, such as healing and prophecy, for Calvin preaching is itself a sufficient sign of the Holy Spirit. However, while the preacher for Calvin is only a servant manifesting the authority of the master,, Korean preachers became authoritative figures under the influence of Confucianism. In the context of early Korean mission, the Eucharist could not be observed frequently as a partner of sermons because of the lack of ordained pastors, the suspicion of cannibalism, and limits of outdoor revival settings for the Eucharist. In addition, in this period, Koreans wanted the message of hope under Japanese colonialism. Therefore, in the Korean Church from 1884 to 1945, "preaching was the most effective and pastoral sacramental sign that was available."

In conclusion, Dr. Kim presents directions for Korean preaching to be more sacramental in today's church. First, he encourages more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper. By inviting worshippers to come to the table unconditionally, preachers can modify the imperative and moralistic style of preaching. Second, he encourages Biblical preaching. When the preacher focuses on what the Bible says, preaching can effectively reveal what Christ did. Baptism and Eucharist show the work of Christ – cleansing sins and nourishing souls. Third, he encourages preachers not to force but to present what is being said in preaching. The table does not force but

invites people. When these things happen, preaching will not dominate worship but be a part of worship, and the preacher will be freed from the anxiety over the result of the sermon, because the one who is active in preaching is not the preacher but the Holy Spirit. When the Korean Church restores the sacramentality of the sermon, preaching will be able to deliver the message of God more effectively and reveal the miracles of God.

Evaluation

There are two noteworthy points in Dr. Kim's study of Korean Protestant preaching between 1884 and 1945. First, Dr. Kim reveals the importance of context for the birth and growth of Korean preaching through a thorough historical investigation. Preaching from 1884 to 1945 was greatly influenced by the historical context of Korea. For example, as Dr. Kim presents, the emphasis on the manifestation of the Spirit in preaching is influenced by shamanism. The continual exposition of a given text, which we can see especially during the Revival Meeting [Puheunghoe], is Buddhism's influence. The didactic, authoritative, and moralistic nature of Korean preaching is greatly influenced by Confucianism. Furthermore, early missionaries' evangelistic, spirit-driven, and moralistic preaching coincides with what Koreans already had through these traditional religions. Their preaching greatly influenced early Korean preachers as a significant background from which Korean preaching originated. As Dr. Kim points out, the text that early Korean preachers preached was not so influential to their preaching—because of the preaching's focus on conversion and moral perfection. However, the con-text in which they were preaching was very influential, determining characteristics of their preaching.

Furthermore, the historical context of Korea from 1884 to 1945 also greatly influenced the growth of Korean preaching. In this period, Korea was under the threat of Japanese colonialism, and people were desperate to hear a message of hope. This need was met by the messages of early Korean preachers. Their message of deliverance was powerful for Koreans hungering for hope. Koreans came to church to find hope, and they found it in the message of the preachers. Because Koreans could find hope in preaching, Korean churches could prevail.³ Dominant topics of Korean preaching, such as suffering and eschatology, came out of this context: as God rescued the Israelites from Pharaoh's tyranny, God would come and deliver

Koreans from the oppression of the Japanese. In short, the difficult historical context of Korea helped its preaching take shape and grows by giving it an appeal to suffering Koreans.

Second, Dr. Kim's understanding of preaching as a sign broadens our view of preaching: what is at stake is not the preached *word* itself but the *Word*—Jesus Christ (John 1:14). Preaching is not just the act of delivering a message to a congregation. Rather, it is a revealing to the congregation of what is inside the message. As Calvin and Dr. Kim say, preaching is a sign and, at the same time, the work of the Holy Spirit showing us what is greater than the word and what the word encapsulates: the person and work of Jesus Christ.⁴ Therefore, the main actor of preaching is neither the preacher nor his or her word. The aim of preaching is also not how the topic or moral admonishment of the text is delivered effectively. Rather, the main actor of preaching is the Holy Spirit revealing the mystery of God, Jesus Christ (Col. 2:2). And the aim of preaching is to present Jesus as the one who gives life and salvation to those who listen.⁵ Like the Eucharist, in preaching people experience the presence of the crucified and risen One. In short, what is happening in preaching is not the encounter with the word but the Word, Jesus Christ.⁶

Furthermore, Dr. Kim's study broadens our view to see that preaching is not an individual event but a communal event. As the congregation participates in a visible sacrament through the Eucharist, they also participate in an invisible but audible sacrament through preaching. Just as there is no distinction between the priest and the congregation in participating in the Eucharist, there is also no difference between the preacher and the congregation in preaching, because they both desire "the empowerment of the Holy Spirit." The one who needs empowerment of the Holy Spirit is not only the preacher who speaks but also the congregation who listens. Without the help of the Holy Spirit and the acceptance of the congregation, preaching becomes meaningless. They should all participate in this mystery/sacrament, so that the presence of Jesus Christ is not in vain, and people can eat and drink the proclaimed body and blood of Jesus Christ.

However, despite his persuasive proof on the birth and growth of Korean preaching and his helpful insights on preaching, Dr. Kim's work has two serious weaknesses. First, he does not provide evidence for the basic premise of his work. In the introduction of his dissertation, he clearly states the importance of the study of Korean preaching between 1884 and 1945 as follows:

"This period was essential for the formation of Korean preaching, because...after the destruction of the Korean church during the [Korean] War [1950-1953], Korean preaching basically followed the tradition, which had been inherited from earlier Korean preachers." This is the starting point of his study. However, he neither presents any evidence to support this argument nor compares contemporary Korean preaching to preaching between 1884 and 1945. He simply states his conclusion: "Korean preaching in the period...greatly influenced and shaped contemporary Korean preaching." Whether his conclusion is right or wrong is an issue for another discussion, because we cannot simply say without supporting evidence whether contemporary Korean preaching was shaped by early Korean preaching. But, our basic concern is the integrity of his writing in and of itself. His work could have had an internal solidarity in its argument and evidence, but it does not, because he does not prove his argument with solid evidence. Consequently, his work has become like a house built on sand.

Second, his suggestion of more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper for the renewal of Korean preaching is based upon a false premise. Dr. Kim argues that more frequent celebration of the Lord's Table might modify the moralistic and imperative style of Korean preaching, because the Lord's Table is a sign of the unconditional grace of God. Here, the premise of his argument is the contradiction between moralistic or imperative preaching and the Lord's Supper. However, moralistic preaching neither necessarily presents conditional acceptance of God nor contradicts the Lord's Supper. What moralistic or imperative preaching presents is not the conditional grace of God but the conditional freedom of the individual? The main concern of Apostle Paul, when he used moralistic preaching in his Corinthian correspondences, was not judgment but the edification of the body of Christ: "If the good of neighbor is involved, one's freedom is conditioned...such service is not a denial of one's rights, but a self-emptying for the sake of weak brothers or sisters...in order to 'build them up."¹³ Likewise, the aim of moralistic or imperative preaching is not to judge but to encourage listeners to live holy as God's people. God's grace is unconditional in preaching as well as in the Eucharist. If preachers miss this point, it will be meaningless to combine the Lord's Table with preaching.

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Assessment

Despite the weaknesses that were detailed above, we can draw three implications from Dr. Kim's work. First, the preacher's job is to bring the life of the congregation to the text and allow the congregation to listen to the text. As Dr. Kim shows, the message preached between 1884 and 1945 was mainly a message of hope, because Koreans were struggling under Japanese colonialism and they wanted to find hope in the message of the preacher. I am not saying that the topic of our preaching should be determined by what people want. Rather, we have to be faithful to the circumstances that the congregation is facing, because preaching becomes useless if the message has no relevance to the congregation and their lives. Their questions, issues, and needs should be the preacher's questions and issues, and the preacher needs to listen to what the text and the Holy Spirit say to him or her so that the congregation can also hear the message of the text.¹⁴

Second, the preacher's job is not to present the preacher himself or herself but to present Christ. One of the distinctive liturgies which we can find in the Korean Church and the Korean American Church is the Revival Meeting [*Puheunghoe*]. Within given days, which often last 3 or 4 days, people gather and listen to the message of a preacher. But, what often happens in the Revival Meeting is the preacher strays far from the text and talks about his or her life. Of course, these can be valuable points through which people can be nurtured and inspired, but some points are far off from the topic as well as the text. They are, as Dr. Kim points out, "nothing more than sharing the pastor's testimonies and experiences." What the preacher is called to do is neither present himself or herself, nor push his or her agenda, but to present Christ. The meeting which is supposed to happen in preaching is not the encounter with the person who is preaching but with the person who is preached. When Christ truly becomes the only person who is presented in preaching, the congregation as well as the preacher can meet Christ and experience the transformation of life which is found not in the preacher but in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Third, the issue of preaching is not what to present but how to present it. Dr. Kim's attempt to apply Calvin's understanding of word and sacrament to Korean preaching is an attempt to seek a way of preaching: how to present the Truth, Jesus Christ. The Korean Church does not currently face the issue of life and death, as it did under the threat of Japanese colonialism in the early 20th century, nor does the Korean-American Church in the United States. People no longer accept authoritarian messages or preaching styles. They are used to listening to

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messages of material blessing and comfort in the comfortable situation in which they are living.¹⁷ They are not used to messages asking for a decision and commitment to follow Christ. However, this does not mean that the message that they hear, or the message that God is giving them, is not a message of decision and commitment. Even though the context in which people are living is changing, God's calling to decision and commitment is same. This is following Christ (Luke 9:23).

In this sense, the issue of preaching is not what to preach, because the core of the message does not change. Rather, the issue of preaching is how to preach, because the message should be heard by listeners. People do not want to be offended or compelled by the message or the messenger. However, this does not mean that they do not want to be challenged. They still want to hear what God says to them. That is why they still come to church no matter how hard or easy their lives are. Between 1884 and 1945, listeners were challenged by preachers and their emotional style of preaching which often included shouting and crying. But, now listeners are challenged by the preacher's skill or by the authority of the preacher. They are used to individual freedom and are educated to make their own decision. The challenge should happen within themselves. Therefore, the issue is how to challenge them. Dr. Kim's attempt to bring Calvin's understanding of word and sacrament to the task of preaching is one way for the people to be challenged to meet Christ in the sermon. But, there can be other ways to challenge listeners through preaching. This is the task that both preachers and congregations should constantly struggle with and resolve.

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¹ Eun Chul Kim, Preaching in the Korean Protestant Church (1884-1945): A Study in Light of John Calvin's Understanding of Word and Sacrament, 10.

² Ibid., 9.

³ Moltmann argues that "where there is hope, there is religion." David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 499.

⁴ Eun Chul Kim, Preaching in the Korean Protestant Church (1884-1945): A Study in Light of John Calvin's Understanding of Word and Sacrament, 171.

⁵ Fred B. Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2002), 38.

⁶ Don E Saliers, Worship and Spirituality (Akon, Ohio: OSL Publications, 1996), 34: "The faith itself is formed and expressed in the encounter with the Crucified One – in the liturgical gestures and actions, within the narrative of Christ's life witnessed in Scripture and *proclamation*, in our going to meet him in his coming to meet us." Emphasis is added by the author.

⁷ Eun Chul Kim, Preaching in the Korean Protestant Church (1884-1945): A Study in Light of John Calvin's Understanding of Word and Sacrament, 171.

⁸ Fred B. Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, 11: "our task is not just to say the word and to tell the truth, but to get the truth heard."

⁹ Eun Chul Kim, Preaching in the Korean Protestant Church (1884-1945): A Study in Light of John Calvin's Understanding of Word and Sacrament, 9.

¹⁰ Ibid 9-10

¹¹ If you want to see diverse kinds of preaching of famous contemporary Korean preachers, see three series of Dr. Yong Sup Jung, *Empty Preaching, Solid Preaching* (Seoul, Korea: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2006); *Between Preaching and Provoking* (Seoul, Korea: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2007); *Desperation and Hope of Preaching* (Seoul, Korea: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2008).

¹² Eun Chul Kim, Preaching in the Korean Protestant Church (1884-1945): A Study in Light of John Calvin's Understanding of Word and Sacrament, 235.

¹³ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 305.

¹⁴ "Just so, the preacher goes to the biblical text as priest, carrying the questions, needs, and concerns of congregation and world, not as an agenda to be met but as an offering to be made. And then the preacher listens to the text." Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 66

¹⁵ Concerning the birth of *Puheung hoe* [revival meeting] in Korea see Kyeong Jin Kim, *The Formation of Presbyterian Worship in Korea*, 1879-1934 (Th. D. dissertation, Boston University, 1999), 130-136.

¹⁶ Eun Chul Kim, Preaching in the Korean Protestant Church (1884-1945): A Study in Light of John Calvin's Understanding of Word and Sacrament, 125.

¹⁷ Ibid., 226-227