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## The Hidden Truth in a Grain of Wheat John 12:20-33

Jessica, a 19 year old college student has visited Korea three times during her summer vacations. When she was told that she was adopted from Korea by her adopted parents, she was eager to find her birth parents in Korea. She works very hard after school during the school year and saves the money that she earns for the next trip to Korea during the next summer vacation to look for her birth parents. She has visited major newspapers and spoken to TV channel reporters to ask them for help to find her parents. The only evidence she has of who she was before she was adopted is a picture of her when she was two years old. Her ultimate concern is to find her birth parents. When I heard Jessica story from my niece who took and guided her to Korea, my heart was broken.

Everybody is eager to seek one's roots. God is the root of human existence. If we were not Christian, and didn't know God, we would be spiritual orphans. Many people are still seeking for living Christ, looking into the picture of Jesus. Like Jessica we are looking into two years old picture of Jesus, the Bible, to find and meet living Christ.

Christians' faith is rooted in image of Jesus Christ; it always has been and it always will be. In and through the biblical images of Jesus, we learn to image God and also we find images of ourselves reflecting on image of Jesus. Everybody wants to have Bible study to know Jesus better.

The Bible is the only source of information of Jesus and is central to our faith as Christians. Christians hold this Bible as special for the life of faith. But how is it special? Forebears in our tradition have called the Bible the inspired Word of God and Divine Revelation. But how can this book impact our life? The records in the Bible have now become the historical evidence of Jesus, His life, His death and His resurrection. We may say that the Bible is enough evidence of the truth of Jesus and God's salvation.

But religious faith is not about historical events in the past or eschatological events in the future, but is about our lives here and now and the way that we see our lives in the ultimate context of God. What is religiously significant is not who Jesus was, but who Jesus is as a living spirit in the hearts of those who follow in his way of love. Christian faith is about our existence before God in the present and not simply about some hoped-for life in the hereafter.

Do you believe Jesus because you saw him? Or do you believe Jesus because you have enough evidences about Him? Jesus said to Thomas, "Have you believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Even Paul, the author of the earliest writings in the New Testament, never claims to have seen the historical Jesus, only the risen Jesus in his vision on the road to Damascus.

The symbol of Christian faith and image of Christ is the cross. I saw this image of Jesus hidden in a grain of wheat. In this small seed I found the hidden truth of Jesus, the same truth as seen in the cross of Jesus, the symbol of victory of truth, of love and eternal hope.

On the day of Jewish festivals, the Passover, some Greeks approached and asked Phillip, a disciple of Jesus, to see Jesus. So Phillip told Andrew of their request and they went and told Jesus about these Greeks. Then Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Jesus talked about this small grain of wheat. Can you see a grain of wheat in my hand?

An American traveler visited Egypt and found a small seed, which seemed like a grain of wheat, inside of the Pyramid. He returned home, taking this small seed, and examined it and found that it was a grain of wheat. A grain of wheat, unburied, lay inside of the Pyramid for thousands of years, and was found by a foreign traveler. The traveler put the grain into the soil, and few days later it came to bud and grew to be a stalk of wheat, which bore a lot of grain. This is a verified truth of what Jesus said, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit," in John 12: 24, two thousand years ago.

This has been an abiding truth to this very day, ever since God created this grain of wheat. This truth is an inexorable truth—a truth that cannot be erased, a truth which cannot be moved. This is exactly the same evidence of the truth of Jesus who was resurrected from death for those of us today. The Lord said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live." How does the resurrection of Jesus impact your life today? In His saying, the Lord explained himself as a grain. There are three paradoxical truths in this parable of a grain of wheat. William Barkley, a noted biblical scholar, interpreted this scripture into three significant elements: 1) Only by death comes life; 2) Only by sending life do we retain life; 3) Only by service comes greatness. I would like share the truth hidden in a grain of wheat in these three perspectives.

First of all, there is eternal hope hidden in a grain of wheat: the hope against all hopes. A grain of wheat is the image of the resurrection of Jesus.

Buddhism is a static religion. Contemplation is the way of religious life. In the Buddhist point of view, human life is very pessimistic. Man is born, man gets old, man gets sick and then man dies after all. They call this life of man vanity.

In Ecclesiastes, referred to as wisdom literature in the Bible, there is a similar pessimistic statement of human life. "Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun?"

If a grain were buried and died, we could say that it has finished its life. Similarly for a human being, it could certainly be seen a manifestly unfortunate for a man to die for others. But Death is not the final chapter of life but the beginning of new life. That is the truth which was revealed by no one else in history but Jesus.

Secondly, there is a transforming power of life hidden in a grain of wheat. This transforming power is called the faith. Jesus said "If you have faith like a mustard seed You will move a mountain."

Erich Fromm, noted social psychologist, said "There are two kinds of people; one is to be and the other to have." We are one who has the courage to be rather than the greed to have.

Marian Preminger was born into enormous wealth. She was born in a castle in Hungary in 1913, 50 a rich aristocratic family. The castle had eighteen bedrooms and its own little chapel. It had a dining room with a table in it that would seat eighty-two people. Marian was reared in luxury.

Marian attended school in Vienna when she was eighteen years old. She met and married a wealthy young man. That marriage lasted about a year. She stayed on in Vienna to pursue acting and met a young German director named Otto Preminger. After they were married, he got a contract to direct movies in Hollywood, where she began to live a rather scandalous life that was typical of Hollywood, especially in those days. Soon Otto Preminger divorced her. Thus her first part of life was painful.

Marian returned to Europe where she met Albert Schweitzer, who was in France on one of his periodic trips to raise funds for his missionary work in Africa. He was staying in a little village called Gunsbach. On a whim, Marian called to see if she could get an appointment to see him. She was granted a visit the very next day. She went out to Gunsbach and found Schweitzer playing Bach on the organ in the village church. She sat and listened for a while until he noticed her.

Marian introduced herself to Albert Schweitzer and he asked, "Can you read music?" Marian said, "Yes." He asked her to be his page-turner as he played the organ, and later he asked her to stay for dinner. She joined his extended family, those people who always came to be with the great man. He presided over those meals like a German father and he concluded them with Scripture and the Lord's Prayer. At the end of the meal, Marian Preminger knew that her search for meaning was over. She found the eternal hope against worldly hopes. She went back to Africa with Albert Schweitzer, and she went to work in his hospital, serving and helping the poor.

This woman of privilege fed people suffering from leprosy who had no hands with which to feed themselves. And she felt happy and blessed and fulfilled. Marian died there,

leaving her name as “Helper.” She lived for others in the last part of her life rather than for herself. She finished her life in great. She started her life to have but she finished her life to be. Her life was transformed by the power of truth from living for herself to living for others, in hoping eternal hope.

Thirdly, there is a philosophy, spirit and new perspective of reviving life. What is your philosophy of life? What spirit is moving your life? Do you have any perspective of reviving life? Without spirit we will lose our life.

Have you heard of the term, “Lateral Thinking?” The concept was invented by Edward De Boro. De Boro established a school in New York, called it “The Edward De Boro School of Thinking.” He teaches how to think creatively and how to think laterally.

Edward De Boro was called in to solve a problem for a large corporation. The corporation was housed in one of those tall New York skyscrapers. The building did not have enough elevators. Consequently, there was a huge morale problem because the office workers were so frustrated and angry and impatient because they had to wait so long for an elevator. The corporate leaders tried everything they could think of to solve the problem. They sped up the elevators. They staggered the worker hours. They even looked at the possibility of adding more elevators, but nothing worked.

Then they brought Edward De Boro in, and he came up with an ingenious idea that solved the problem immediately. You won’t believe what it was. He told them to install mirrors around the elevator doors. The people will see themselves in the mirrors and become so interested in looking at themselves that they won’t notice that they are waiting so long for the elevator. And it worked! That is called “Lateral Thinking.” Jesus is the mirror that we can find our image and reflect the hope, faith and love to others.

Lateral Thinking is the perspective of the thinking of the Lord Jesus. If we put it into His Words, “It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave.” (Matthew 20:26-27)

In our work place or house or in society at large, if this truth were observed, our world would be radically different, and happier. The Bible, from cover to cover, is emphatic about the fact that self-centeredness will ultimately destroy us. There is also truth on the flip side: Be a grain of wheat, then you will have a successful life.

The best philosophy of life is the Love. The greatest spirit is the Love. The perspective of new reviving life is also love. The greatest love is sacrificing love hidden in a grain of wheat. Love is the philosophy you should have; the spirit you should keep; the vision you should live out that Christ lived, crucified and resurrected.