







ISSUE 146

August 2014

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Feature

The First and the Last

Bill Tseng

Jesus once gave three speeches with the same conclusion: the last will be first, and the first last. He was referring to the important principles in the Kingdom of God – a reference that provides us with food for thought.

The first of the speeches refers to the parable of the vineyard labourers (Matthew 20:11-16). In the early morning, a landowner hired labourers to work on his vineyard, with the agreed wage of a denarius a day. Then about the third hour, he hired more labourers and agreed to give them “whatever is right”. Again he went out about the sixth, ninth, and eleventh hour, and did likewise. When evening had come, it was time for paying wages. The labourers who went into the vineyard at the eleventh hour got one denarius. Those who went into the vineyard earlier thought they would receive more. However, to their surprise, they likewise received each a denarius. Those who went into the vineyard early in the morning and had worked the whole day complained against the owner. However, the owner answered, “Friend, [d]id you not agree with me for a denarius? I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things?” Jesus was speaking of the principle that the grace of God’s kingdom extends to all; God’s saving grace is bestowed on all. Those who are called are

called by grace. God will have mercy on whomever He will have mercy. So then it is not of our labour, but of the mercy of God (Romans 9:14-16). This is the principle of our heavenly Father as it relates to His salvation. The reward in heaven to those who are saved are also given fairly. There is no differentiation between the first and the last. It is God who decides and the same treatment extends to all. We can only receive with thanksgiving. Therefore, He concluded this way: “So the last will be first, and the first last” (Matthew 20:16).

The second speech encourages people to strive to enter through the narrow gate (Luke 13:22-30). Jesus said to the crowds, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 13:22-28). He further said, “They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last” (Luke 13:29-30). For the Kingdom of God accepts those who strive to enter. As for those who hesitate or set their heart on the wide gate and easy path, they will not be able to enter the kingdom when the Master of the house shuts the door. Jesus spoke of the principle of selection into the kingdom: God accepts true believers of the Lord; whether one is saved depends on whether one has entered through the narrow gate of the Lord’s truth, but not on the basis of first-come, first served (Luke 13:30). This is the principle for salvation. If we have received the Lord’s teachings, but dwell outside the gate, it will not do us any good.

The third speech is Jesus’ reminder for the followers of the Lord who are to receive their reward (Mark 10:28-31; Matthew 19:29-30). Jesus said that it would be difficult for those who rely on wealth to enter into the heavenly kingdom. Peter indicated that he did not rely on wealth and had left all to follow Jesus. Jesus answered him this way: those who follow the Lord will surely receive their reward. However, many who are first will be last, and the last first (Mark 10: 23-31). Jesus spoke of the principle of granting grace and reward in God’s kingdom. If we follow the Lord, we will surely receive our reward, but the granting of the reward is not done on a first-come, first-served basis, but on an evaluation of the things we have given up for the Lord. This is the principle of granting reward: if one has a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what one does not have (2 Cor 8:12). God knows what we have and what we do not have and, based on how much we are willing to give up for the Lord, we will be rewarded accordingly. It has nothing to do with who are first or last.

These three principles of the kingdom of God are a great encouragement to those who preach about the Saviour. God’s saving grace and His blessings extend equally to all. Those who enter the vineyard when the Master still accepts them will all receive blessings. In our ministry, the workers of God will surely not labour in vain, but will lead people to God. But even though God’s grace extends to all, each individual must strive to enter through the narrow gate in order

to receive the grace. God's workers should strive to preach and pastor whether in season or out, and God's favour will fall on them. As to when we will lead people to God, it depends on God's choosing and men's choices. For those who are willing to follow God and serve Him, they will surely be blessed.

Jesus said, "But many who are first will be last, and the last first." We are those that are first. If we do not remain vigilant, we may become the last. In the mill of the work of worldwide evangelism, we, as those commissioned by God, must act in accordance with the principle of God's kingdom and follow His will and schedule to strive forward courageously and not fall behind.

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 [Church News](#)

Australia Holy Work Report

There are four churches in the Australian Coordination Board, one prayer house, one place of worship, and two evangelical coordinators for pioneering areas. Other than routine pastoring, evangelism, and training work, below is a brief report introducing the status of each church, prayer house, and pioneering work from last year.

Regarding Pastoral Work

Adelaide prayer house was officially approved by the South Australia State to become an incorporated organization last December. This means that there is a hope of future purchase of a chapel. Adelaide prayer house was also approved to become the prayer house of Australian Coordination Board in this May's NCC. The transitional committee also plans to elect new council members in 2016 to become the official church council.

In the past, the churches in Australia started from family services. With the increase of immigrants and truth seekers baptizing, the church continued to grow. This means that the pastoral work became increasingly heavy. Therefore, Melbourne church's council established an Adult Care Group, from the method of pastoring through youth fellowship. Each group would be responsible for caring for the groups within each region in order to provide a more in depth care. Sidney church also established a caring group for Fuqing members, especially the members who recently immigrated from Fuqing.

As for the pioneering and pastoral work in Fiji, a few brothers from Fuqing started their gravel mining business in Navua about four years ago. There are more than ten members now. Thank

God, starting from February of this year, they officially started having regular service and prayer session on Friday nights and Saturdays mornings.

There are two chapels in the churches within Australia, Perth, and Melbourne. Both churches have services concurrently on Friday nights. The recent congregational meeting from Perth agreed to hold service concurrently on Sabbath in the near future. If this goal is reached, there should be two churches in the Perth area very soon. For the sake of future branching out of Perth church, there will be additional seminars and spiritual cultivation seminars targeted according to each type of work every time there are elders or pastors visiting. This is in hopes of having enough workers to complete the work of branching out.

Sidney church has the largest population in the Australia area. The training work at church has also been on track. Many youths are able to take on the responsibility of all kinds of church work. The chapel is also running out of room. However, the real estate pricing in Sidney has been increasingly high, causing it to be difficult to purchase another chapel. We hope there will be more than two churches in the international city of Sidney in the near future.

Darwin place of worship has ten members. The Darwin committee started in 2011, using the Taiwan GA youth religious material as the main basis of establishing adult religious education curriculum. This is to establish the members' foundation systematically. Thank the Lord, a few brothers and sisters already started taking the work of delivering the sermons. This is a great break through for them. Papua New Guinea's public safety has improved since the election of 2012. Therefore, there were workers who visited last March and May. Thank the Lord that a member who owns a small grocery store was found in the capital, Port Moresby. They were also willing to take the hospitality work towards the church holy workers. May the Lord bless and keep them.

Regarding Evangelical Work

Brisbane church started diligently preaching the Gospel along the Gold Coast in 2012. Last year, the church consistently held monthly Gospel tea fellowships at the Gold Coast. There were close to twenty truth seekers who attended last year's services, including regular truth seekers. Thank the guidance of the Lord, the hymnal evangelical type services transitioned into evangelical services with extensive series of topics. This helps those truth seekers who regularly attend service understand the truth better in a systematic way. We hope that the Gold Coast will become a more stable service location with more frequent services in the near future so that the tent of God can be extended.

Due to the fact that Australia is made up of a variety of cultures, different literatures were created to fit each of their daily needs, in hope of widely preaching the Gospel. For this reason, fliers were created last year to target Jews who already believe in Jesus. It is also planned to

publish in areas with Jewish concentration in Melbourne or Sidney in order to transcend the limitations of cultural and race differences.

Regarding Training Work

At the end of every year, Short-Term Theological Training Course (STTTC) and National Working Youth Seminar (NWYS) are the main works in Australia. In order to strengthen the faith of the youths, many resources, manpower, and financial help are invested to execute this training task. In addition to the regular workshop, systematic theology courses were added in order to strengthen the curriculum of the national youth seminar. This will enable youths to build up a firm foundation of spiritual work. Thank the guidance of the Lord, they have completed the curriculum of Monotheism, Christology, Holy Spirit, and Men (including Angels and Satan).

Last year was the first year that the youths were in charge of the training classes at the National Religious Education Seminar held at Perth church under the guidance of the department of training. This is different from the past of borrowing manpower from other regions to train the new Religious Education teachers. This also shows that the training work is becoming more mature in the Australia regions.

Thank the Lord, Australia is a country with great land and abundant resources. It is a country with a fast growing economy. We pray for God's abidance to prosper the works of Australia churches. We must wisely utilize the resources given by God to carry out the responsibility God has entrusted with His grace and gift. We also hope for intercession of the works in Australia so that the churches where the sun rises can send out the lights of the Gospel and glorify the holy name of the Lord.



Perth Church Members Group Picture



Melbourne Church Members Group Picture



Sidney Church Members Group Picture

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 *Intercession*

1. Please pray for IA work assignment as below:

Date	Location	Program	Personnel
8/1-17	Sabah	Preacher Seminar/ Divine Workers Spiritual Nurture/ Divine Workers' Training Seminar	Daniel Lee
8/18-28	Korea	Preachers Theological Seminar	HH Ko
8/5-14	West Malaysia	Preachers Refresher Course	HH Ko
8/19-9/5	Philippines	Seminary Course	Thomas Kam
8/6-12	Tonga	Mission Trip	Joshua Phoong
8/15-20	Samoa	Mission Trip	Joshua Phoong
8/16-18	Argentina	RE Teacher Retreat	IA assign RE specialist
8/28-9/14	Brazil	Pastoral Work	GH Chen
8/1-3	Chile	Spiritual Convocation	CM Chu
8/3-24	UK	National Youth Theological Seminar(Newcastle/Sunderland)	Timothy Yeung
8/26-27		AMC Meeting(Sunderland Church)	Africa Ministry Workers
8/13-20	Italy	Co-worker Training /Spiritual Convocation(Prato)	BQ Wang
8/21-26	Spain	Visit & Concern(Madrid / Albacete / Barcelona)	CJ Hsieh

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 *You Could Help the Worldwide Evangelism Mission Simply by Contribution
a dollar a day...*



How You Can Help

You are called to take action for the sake of worldwide evangelism and the spreading of the gospel...with **a dollar a day**. If everyone could daily extend one dollar towards the International Assembly World Evangelism Fund, we could, together, accomplish the commission that our Lord Jesus Christ left behind. Your financial commitment will open up possibilities and resources that will lead us to save many souls.

Please take time to fill out the offering sheet available at your local church, to pass this message on to loved ones and family, and to pray for God's ministry. May the Lord be gracious to you!

To find out more about the dollar-a-day program and donation options, ***please contact*** ia@tjc.org or tjciatwn@ms25.hinet.net.

✧ *May our Lord remember your contribution and bless you abundantly!*

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