

Becoming People of Substance

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August 10, 2003



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"Becoming People of Substance" was the topic of the sermon given by Rev. Hwang on August 10, 2003. He told the congregation:

"It is essential for us, as we tread the path of faith, to deeply know the heart of God, which is vertical, and God's providence, which is horizontal. God does not stay in one place, but constantly moves as He supervises the providence. It can be said that this knowledge is the lifeline of our faith."

Do we feel the same? Can we sense the central importance of being aware of God's providence and acting in line with it not only on a cosmic level but also in our personal lives as our Heavenly Parent is longing to guide us while we strive to live in line with His desire?

Among the tasks to be accomplished Rev. Hwang mentioned: "True Parents told us that in order to attain the realm of substance, all blessed families must lay a tribal foundation. By laying a tribal foundation, we must also make the realm of substance in our physical lives. We must become tribal messiahs and the True Parents of our tribes. And now we must become not just the messiahs, but the ancestors of our tribes on earth..."

How should we go about living significant lives? True Parents told us that wherever we are, whenever it is, and no matter what circumstance we are in, we must live our lives as if it is always noon, casting no shadows behind us, or in front of us. They emphasized that this is how our lives can become significant.

Beloved members, it is true that we are walking a path that is totally different from the rest of the world and for which no precedent exists in history, and with the True Parents standing in our midst!"

I am convinced that it is decisive for the victorious outcome of our efforts that we have a very clear understanding of our providential position, being entrusted with the privilege to live at the same time as the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind and to represent them in this world. Therefore I share with you what has been inspiring for me when reading the book with core sermons by Rev. Hwang. I hope that this series may be helpful to deepen your own understanding of our Heavenly Parents' expectations at this advance period in His providence.

Dr. Hwang spoke to leaders of the Family Federation and related organizations throughout Korea in a tour that commenced in late February and concluded in early March 2004 under the theme "A Call to Action" where he explained: "It is clear that our religion is very different from others. What I mean by this is that our church was not born of a desire to create another religious group.

We have worked hard until now to free ourselves from the boundaries inherent in existing religion and have aimed at actualizing an era in which we can live as perfected individuals even without the guidance of a church. Yet the reality is that we are fast becoming another religion, taking the form of just another church."

Is such a concern of the former president of our church in Korea justified? 7 years have passed since such a serious concern was expressed and it seems that we have become even more than ever just like another church. In which way is our attitude different in matters of organization as communities in comparison with other churches?

Rev. Hwang offered the following considerations: "For six thousand biblical years, ever since the beginning of history, religion has existed wherever people have existed, and the changes brought about in 2000 were changes from an era of religion to an era without religion. Do you realize what a great change reporting to Heaven in your own name without going through a medium is? When you consider these changes not only as changes in our church but in a broader sense, you will see that these changes took us out of the framework of religions – a historic change. This is a revolution..."

My dear brothers and sisters, have we internalized this fundamental change and concentrated on living according to the Heavenly standard independently of what others are doing because we know the time has come for the complete fulfillment of the task of religion?

In the context of speaking about the burdens True Parents have to carry Rev. Hwang expressed his concern: "We have many problems to solve, but the greatest problem of all is the fact that we are becoming hardened. Without being aware of it, we – I included – are losing our innocence and becoming systematized. I find myself riding in an expensive car and sitting in the church president's chair. But worse than that, our church is hardening into another religion, just as other religions have done in the past. This is the problem we are facing right now.

... We start to be distracted on the way, and the more we go, the more we get accustomed to such a life. Though we answer yes when asked, in our hearts, we do not carry out what we promise to do. We are hardening little by little. This is our reality. We were not like this originally, but due to reasons not known to us, we have become like this."

Have we resolved this serious problem during the past 7 years so that we are now free of such a completely wrong tendency? How flexible are we to respond to the work of the Living God in the hearts of His children? In which way are we bound by church rules and regulations that are hindering us to allow the presence of our Heavenly Parent in our midst because we may emphasize external matters over internal content?

About the relationship between True Father and True Mother and us as members of their extended family Rev. Hwang explained: "At first we prayed in the name of True Parents, but now they have detached us, so that we can become their representatives, having the same qualities as they possess. We are the fourth Adam in essence, True Parents are the third Adam, yet we are the fourth Adam, are the same as True Parents."

Is this how we feel about True Father and True Mother? Do we understand clearly that we are supposed to be like them, embodying the same qualities as they have? Are we emphasizing such an attitude towards them or do we put them high up as an ideal that we can never reach ourselves?

What True Father and True Mother feel about us is expressed through Rev. Hwang's explanations in connection with their giving the Cheon Il Guk reward – even though we have greatly fallen short of their expectations: "True Parents are already in the land of Canaan and the time has come to build God's sovereignty. We who are supposed to go in with True Parents are not ready for this. Thus, True Parents are feeling a great sense of betrayal because of us.

I could not raise my head to True Father this morning. None of us here would have been able to raise our head. It is not that we have not been trying. But did we do it? Did we really accomplish anything? After adding up the numbers Father said, 'So, these people who have been following me for thirty or forty years restored only fifty people?' This is what he said. He feels that we have betrayed him."

In the face of the reality in which many members find themselves Rev. Hwang said that if we continue going this way, "we will end up being lifeless people who are alive in name only – internally dead. Are we any different from the other religions? We go to church on Sundays, take attendance, maybe reluctantly donate a bit, and when True Parents are here we reluctantly go to Hoon Dok Hae at Hannam-dong, attend sleepily and go back home. That is how we are, isn't it?"

Each one of us knows very well to which extent it applies to me personally what is pointed out in these lines. Whatever we may feel about our own standard, it is surely worth the investment to have a second look at what kind of attitude we actually have in front of God and True Parents.

Concerning our task as tribal messiahs Rev. Hwang told Korean members: "How are we going to bring our tribe into the cultural realm of heart? I am working on this now, but it doesn't mean that I should bring my Christian nephew to convert to the Unification Church. Of course, it would be better for him to do so, but that doesn't mean he absolutely has to. My nephew is a Christian minister, but he listens to what I tell him. He can enter the cultural realm of heart if he can establish a true family. The glue that will bind us together beyond religion, race and nationality is the culture of heart. He may be a Christian or a Buddhist, but if he can overcome the individualism of today, join with others centering on heaven and keep his purity, we can bring him into the cultural realm of heart of where true families reside.

We need to guide our tribe into the cultural realm of heart. Our second responsibility is neighborhood and community outreach..."

In respect to what kind of church we should be Rev. Hwang said: "We must create a dynamic community where all the members take responsibility. True Parents have stated that we must become their second selves and heirs. The time has come for us to become True Parents second selves, who can inherit their achievements, heart and the providence, so that we may stand as their representatives."

The conclusion of his speech was: "Father has made his diagnosis. What do you think the result was? It is obvious that we were diagnosed as having cancer. It is not ordinary influenza, it is not a skin condition. We are sick and may die... What is clear is that this disease that we have is cancer, which means that we absolutely have to take some risks with our lives. I pray that you all can agree to the fact that we now live as abstemiously as possible – eat less, wear simple clothes, sleep less – and cultivate new life instead."