

Missionary Grace HeeJae Oh's Homecoming Ceremony Message

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by Rev. David Yoon Oh

Key Verse: John 11:25-27: 25 “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

Missionary Grace Oh was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer six years ago. When she visited the hospital six years ago, the cancer had spread from top to bottom and had metastasized to her brain and liver. Her doctor said that she could live at most 6 months to one year. His longest surviving patient had lived for 3 years.

Msn Grace Oh lived for 6 years since then. She lived comparatively in peace for those six years, except the few months just before she passed away. It was a miracle that she lived for 6 years, but her life during those years was even more shocking to us. For the last six years, she never lost the peace in her face and never worried about her sickness or showed her fear of death, not even once. There are many witnesses around us and church members who can testify this. Indeed, she was not afraid of death. I mean that death does not exist in Msn. Grace Oh.

Msn. Grace Oh was born in an unbelieving family. In her middle school years as a sensitive teenage, she had to go through a difficult time. She had a newly married older sister. Her sister was not supposed to get pregnant, and her doctor warned her against getting pregnant. If she became pregnant, she might lose her life. But her sister became pregnant in order to please her husband. She ignored her doctor's advice to abort the baby. As a result, she died 7 months into the pregnancy. This incident became a great shock to Msn. Grace Oh, and she experienced the reality of death.

In her teenage and college life, she struggled with anxiety, fear, and depression under the shadow of death. The philosopher Kierkegaard once said that the existence of human beings lies in anxiety and fear. He said that anxiety and fear come from death. Msn. Grace Oh confronted this human existence in her teenage years, and the shadow of death pressed down on her heart. No matter how hard she struggled to get out of it, the reality of death grew bigger to her. Death became her biggest reality. Fear, anxiety, and depression followed her like a shadow.

After finishing her gloomy college life, she started working in a hospital in Seoul with anxiety and fear. There, she met a nurse colleague who was a UBF missionary. She heard the gospel from her and began to study the Bible with her. Through one-to-one

Bible study with her, Msn Grace Oh met Jesus personally and started a new life with Jesus. The most dramatic change in her life after she believed in Jesus and followed him was the disappearance of her anxiety and fear. Death, which was existence and reality to her, became non-existent and unrealistic. Her undeniable reality after meeting the Lord was Jesus Christ. This was the great experience to her. It became her new reality which helped her experience the life of Christ.

Jesus visited the dead Lazarus. Martha, sister of Lazarus, told Jesus that her brother would not have died if Jesus had been with him. Jesus said that Lazarus would rise again. Martha answered that she knew that he would rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

To Martha, resurrection was one of the incidents which would happen in the future. As Martha said, if resurrection is one of the incidents which would happen at the last day, our resurrection remains imperfect. As Lazarus was raised and died again, our resurrection could also be imperfect as we die.

But Jesus did not say that resurrection was one of those incidents, he said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” When Jesus said that he is the resurrection, he meant his relationship with us. The life and the resurrection which we possess are Jesus Christ himself. When the Lord is our resurrection, the resurrection life becomes eternal life. This is because Christ is the everlasting God. The resurrection life is the life in which death and failure cannot come near. This is because there is no death or despair in Christ Jesus, who is the eternal God. The resurrection is the power of God which swallows death and dispels despair.

When Jesus said that he is the resurrection, he did not mean that the resurrection life is just the absence of death. God’s life is like a pouring waterfall which produces unmeasurable life, meaning, and joy. Where there is God’s life, death turns into life and despair is changed into hope. Because Jesus is the resurrection, our resurrection life possesses God’s life. Msn Grace Oh lived tasting this life which brought unceasing peace and gratitude into the center of her life.

Right after she was diagnosed with cancer, she opened a blog. She thought that using a blog was the best way to preach the gospel in her sickness. Through the blog, she drew pictures and began to explain the gospel. She shared the word of God and preached the gospel. 4,000 followers around the world heard the gospel message through her. Among them, there are even many Muslims.

In her blog there are many of her life stories. In her life story, she compared herself to a demon-possessed man in Gerasa who was occupied with 2,000 demons. She said that it was her who cried out and tortured herself day and night near the tomb under the power of death. Jesus visited her, who was like such a demon-possessed man. Jesus

visited her by overcoming the storm in order to meet her while she was suffering with 2,000 demons. Jesus crossed the sea of death and came to her. Jesus, who she met, is such a loving Savior.

Jesus said that he is the resurrection. Death is the prerequisite of resurrection. Resurrection is a proclamation of crossing the sea of death. In fact, the words, "I am the resurrection," is not a proper expression to say for the Almighty God who owns the whole world. God does not need any prerequisite, even death. He does not need to claim the prerequisite of death for moral, philosophical, and theological reasons. But Jesus was not hesitant to proclaim that he is the resurrection. This is the proclamation of love. This is the proclamation of an unutterable, marvelous, and incomprehensible love. Therefore, Jesus' words, "I am the resurrection and the life," is the most relational and powerful confession of love and the most beautiful romance.

Msn. Grace Oh always stood in the presence of the Risen Christ. She clearly saw the Risen Christ's nail-pierced hands and foot which were caused by her sins. She cried with many tears before the Risen Christ who came to see her. Her tears were the tears of thanks and joy of one who used to be possessed by 2,000 demons. I have never heard her say even once that her life was sacrificial or devotional. Recently I heard others say that she was such a great disciple-maker. Her life was just like the tears of gratitude and joy of the demon-possessed man.

She loved the word of God and meditated it daily without missing even one day. God fulfilled his word through Msn. Grace Oh and let her experience his word in her real life. She lived comparatively in peace for 6 years and suffered much just before she passed away. Despite the severe pain she refused to take painkillers. She might have done so because it was during the weeks of Lent. One pastor commented that it might have been God's great gift to Msn. Grace. It is impossible for her to experience and understand Jesus' excruciating pain on the cross, but it could still be a blessing for her to participate in his pain. She died in peace. She went to the Lord so peacefully that even her family could not recognize her departure.

Not long after her departure, I received a message from a Pilipino brother who used to work together with us and then moved to New York. He said that he wanted to donate his mother's burial site to Msn. Grace Oh. As Jesus was buried in a burial site with the rich, so Msn. Grace Oh was buried in a rich's tomb. Her burial site is in the same cemetery where many famous Hollywood stars were buried such as Bettie Davis, Lucille Ball, Stan Laurel and so on. It is one of the most expensive cemeteries in LA. As the Scripture says that the righteous who lead people into right path will shine like stars in the sky, God shows us his unique providence with comfort and challenge. Insomuch, her homecoming ceremony becomes a heavenly feast, just as she had always expected.