



SAINT THOMAS CHURCH FIFTH AVENUE
in the City of New York
The Reverend Canon Carl F. Turner, Rector
www.SaintThomasChurch.org

March 20, 2022, Solemn Evensong
The Third Sunday in Lent

Solemn Evensong
4pm

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A Sermon by
The Rev. Prisca Lee-Pae, *Associate for Pan-Asian Ministry*

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Martyrs of Our Time: Won-Chang Lee & Jun-Kyoung Moon

Today I would like to share the story of Rev. Michael Won-Chang Lee, who was martyred in North Korea.

Even though I have never met him in person,
I am labeled as the great-granddaughter of the martyr,
Rev. Michael Won-Chang Lee in the Anglican Church of Korea.

Reading his name and story in the Church history book
and looking at his picture hanging in the Seoul Cathedral,
it is a strange feeling that a familiar face and familiar name for me is called a martyr.

Rev. Lee lost his father at an early age of 14,
and after losing his father, his family began to decline, forcing him to lead a difficult life.

When he studied at night, I was told that there was no lamp,
So, he gathered fireflies in a glass bottle to read.

In his youth, he studied at Gyoung-Seong Foreign Language School,
and he became fluent in English.

He served 20 years as a clerk of the first, second, and third Anglican Bishops,
who came to Korea as missionaries.

After he was ordained to priesthood, he served several churches.

He appointed the first Korean nun to establish a convent in the Anglican Church of Korea
and served as the chief executive by assisting Bishop Mark Trollope in the early stages of construction of the Seoul Cathedral.

Later he was appointed as the Dean of North Korea Deanery
and devoted all his talents and energy to plant 20 churches.

Thus, the church flourished enough to prepare for the establishment of the Diocese of Pyongyang.

But the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950.

And he decided that he should protect the church until there was no parishioner left behind,
while making all the family and other priests move to south.

He insisted that he could not leave the church until the very end.

On January 4, 1951, a Korean military Senior officer Doo-Seong Lee who was a church member came to him and asked him to leave to south together,
but he did not change his mind.

He remained in the North Korea and shared his destiny with the church.

He said, "If there is even one parishioner left, I will protect the church."

Our family, his descendants, do not know even until today, when and how he died. Nevertheless, it is clearer than anything else about where he is now.

And he has left us with the most valuable and precious teachings and heritage for our family and the Anglican Church of Korea.

I would like to share another story of a Korean martyr, Jun-Kyung Moon, the first female martyr in the history of the Korean church.

She took the lead in missions and walked so much that 9 pairs of her shoes that were worn out in a year.

She preached the gospel in 14 towns and villages in the Sinan County, which is made up of hundreds of small islands in the southwestern part of the Korean Peninsula for 20 years and established over 100 churches.

Also, she produced about 160 pastors and 80 elders among the 2,400 residents of one island called Jeungdo where she died.

Just as the Apostle Paul did the 1st and 2nd missionary journeys,

Moon also traveled from island to island in a sailboat, preaching the gospel.

The only means of transportation to and from the island was a small sailboat.

One day the waves were rough, and the wind was strong,

but to go to another island, the boat was forced to float.

Suddenly the waves grew stronger, and the rain and wind started to blow,

and the boat was in danger, not being able to see an inch ahead.

The people on board were lying flat on the floor, shivering, thinking they were going to die.

In an instant, Preacher Moon grabbed the oar that the sailor had dropped in fear and prayed out loud,

“Living Heavenly Father! If we die here now, who will take care of our poor little sheep?

I already believe in God and have become an evangelist, so even if I die, I will go to heaven

but thinking of the members of the church that I just planted, I cannot die like this.

Help me to complete the rest of my mission to the end and die!

The living Jesus who calmed the wind with a single word.

Calm these waves and winds! Lord! I believe.”

At that moment, like happened in the Bible, the wind became calm and the rain stopped.

Preacher Moon sang a song of thanks on the boat.

Others in the boat were mesmerized by this incredible sight,

then came to their senses and sang along praising God.

Later, it is said that all these people came to believe in Jesus.

During the end of Japanese oppression,

Preacher Moon was imprisoned and forcibly taken away from the church

because she refused to worship the Japanese shrine, despite the atrocious coercion,

and was against the recruitment of the Comfort Women for Japanese military.

After liberation, when the devastating Korean War broke out

and the church members were on the verge of death,

she hurried back to her mission field to protect them saying,

“Not one of our church members should die because of me.

Even if I am going to die, I will go back for them.”

As soon as she came back she was beaten with a baton and killed with a gun.

Before she was shot, Preacher Moon said her last prayer,

“Father, do not accuse them of their sins, and receive my sinful soul.”

She was martyred at the age of 59.

Just as God, who appeared to Moses,

heard the cries of the suffering Israelites in Egypt,

God heard the cry of the Korean people suffering under Japanese rule

and the suffering of them whose country was cut in half

as a result of the battle for control between the supreme powers.

That is probably one of the reasons

Korea had such a rapid and incredible church growth than any other country

despite the short history of Christian evangelization.

Just as the Old Testament the people confesses God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

I call my God as God of Won-Chang Lee, Jun-Kyoung Moon and many Korean martyrs.
I am grateful with my whole heart to the Korean men and women
who devoted themselves to the people, to the church
and who left the name of God that I can claim.

In New Testament reading today, Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves Jesus.
And Peter answers him “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.”
It is Peter who denied Jesus three times,
even he had promised to lay down his life for Jesus before.
Even after meeting the resurrected Jesus,
Peter was the first one who said, ‘I am going fishing.’
When he met the risen Jesus again on a fishing boat,
Peter put on clothes and jumped into the sea.
But Jesus called this bizarre, simple, and ordinary man, ‘Rock’,
and on this rock, he built His Church.
People who are called martyrs including Peter may not be as great as we think, or very different from us.
Jesus said to Peter, “Do you love me? Then follow me!”
This is what Jesus says to us as well.
The way of Jesus is not the flowery path.
It is rather the way of suffering, the way of cross.
But why is the one who loves us telling us to follow the way of suffering, the way of cross, not the way of
flower?
Because the way of suffering and the cross does not lead to the way of death,
but leads to the true life.
When Rev. Won-Chang Lee was prepared to die
to share his destiny with the church in North Korea
and when Preacher Jun-Kyung Moon returned to the island risking death,
would there be no fear in their hearts?
There must be. But there was something greater than fear of death in their hearts.
It is love that never gives up as Jesus did to Peter, who had denied Jesus three times,
yet Jesus commanded to take care of his sheep, three times.
The love of God who is desperately searching for the lost sheep.
The love that willingly crucified for our salvation.
Rev. Won-Chang Lee and Preacher Jun-Kyung Moon, who embraced that love,
did not back down in fear and did not run away from protecting the sheep.
How blessed are those who have the love of God in their hearts?
No one on this earth has possessed more precious things than them.
There is no one more blessed than them.
But those who are called martyrs were not special people.
They were ordinary people like you and me.
It is the great love that makes these ordinary people extraordinary.
God who made us in God’s image does not give more love or less.
God gives love abundantly to everyone.
It depends on how wide our hearts are open to receive this love.
I pray that we will be able to open our hearts wide this Lent
so that we can embrace the great love of the Lord even more.
I pray that we can enjoy that great blessing even more.
I pray that we will be able to take one step forward without hesitation
at the voice of him who invites us to the way of true life.