

Revelation 21:22-26 “Nations will bring their glory”

A homily by Kevin Park

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I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

My family immigrated to Toronto, Canada from Seoul, Korea when I was nine years old.

I remember the plane ride well. It was Japanese airlines. I remember because my father spoke Japanese to the flight attendants. I didn't know he could speak Japanese. When we arrived in Toronto airport my father asked for directions in English. I didn't know he could speak English. I thought he was pretty cool. Hey, this was my dad! But soon I learned English and began to realize how broken my father's English really was. In fact, as I became more “Canadianized” I realized how painfully Korean my father really was. He didn't seem so cool anymore.

He got a job as a commercial artist in some company and everyday when he came home from work he was just in a bad mood and brought the whole family down. I began to resent him. Then one day he called home and asked me to bring his wallet to work because he forgot it. So I go there and walk into this large room with a maze of cubicles. I had trouble finding him. He was tucked away, way at the corner, with what seemed like the smallest space there. I gave him the wallet and he said, “Let's go out, I'll buy you lunch.” So I followed him out but on the way he stopped at an office. The door was open and as we approached it I heard a couple of people talking and laughing aloud in there, just having a good time. My father stopped at the door way. He didn't go in. I stood beside him. We waited there standing for some time. This manager guy finally

noticed us, immediately stopped laughing, turned to my father and said, “What do you want?” as though it was a bother. My father in his painfully broken English said, “I go for lunch now. This is my number one son.” He said it with anticipation. I was embarrassed.

The man didn’t even glance at me.

He blurted out, “Well, you better be back in thirty minutes!” My father’s eyes dropped. He didn’t look at me. He couldn’t look at me. We stood there together, silent, awkward. It seemed like a long time. The men turned and continued their conversation and laughter. At that moment I felt rage and shame at the same time. Part of me wanted to go over there and punch this guy out. How dare he treat us like that. How dare he speak to *my* father like that! But I didn’t do anything. I didn’t say anything. I just stood there feeling really small and helpless. My father walked out and I followed. I don’t remember what we had for lunch that day but I do remember not saying anything as we ate. I understood him after that, why he was in a bad mood when he came home. I understood what he was enduring everyday but couldn’t share it with us. I had new respect for my father. I understood. I thought he was cool once again. He was my dad!

The passage that we heard is the last part of John’s vision in Revelation and describes the new Jerusalem. The city will be filled with God’s glory and the nations will walk by the light of God. People will bring into this city the glory and the honor of the nations.

The word for nations there is the Greek word *ethnai*, where we get the word ethnicity from. So God’s kingdom is not some melting pot where our distinctions are blended into some bland, colorless unity. No. The nations and the ethnic peoples are not

abolished but they're preserved and redeemed in the kingdom of God and they will bring their glory into it. The nations are set free from their prejudices and hatreds and fears of each other, but in their differences they will come together praising and glorifying God in dynamic, exciting unity.

And as long as we pray, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," this isn't some distant eschatological hope that has nothing to do with us here and now but this vision claims us, as God's people, to strive and to struggle to participate in this coming of God's kingdom.

So in God's kingdom my father is not going to speak broken English.

He's going to speak perfect **Korean**.

And people will listen and rejoice and he will be bringing glory into the kingdom of God.