

March 26, 2017

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Messenger: Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Can You Eat Solid Food?"

— Five Conditions for Growing in Faith—

Text: Hebrews 5:11~14

5:11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand.

5:12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

5:13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Introduction

- Animals and fish continue severe struggle for survival. Young ones are always in danger of losing their lives. Therefore, the young of herbivorous animals like cows, horses and sheep stand up as soon as they are born.
- A young zebra in the African savanna stands up soon and begins to walk because it is the best prey for a lion, a flesh-eating animal. Therefore, a young zebra must stand by itself so that it is able to survive. **The important thing is to stand up by oneself.**
- Christians believe in God and come to gather in church. However, we must not be a child in faith. **It is important to stand up by oneself.** If a child is in good health, he naturally keeps growing. Animals and plants that were born or came up naturally keep growing.
- My friends, we don't drink mother's milk as adults. We begin to eat baby food and then solid food. We grow up like this. If a child doesn't grow up, his parents are worried about their child. The author of the epistle sent a letter to Hebrew Christians (Messianic Jews) . He wrote as below—

5:12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

- The author stopped writing about the main subject of the epistle, but he gave a warning with anxiety to believers who were not growing in faith, because he knew that many of them didn't understand the important subject (from Chapter 7) that he intended to write later. He tried to make their spiritual attitude ready for listening and studying the Word of God.
- If man's heart is hard or he has poor hearing, he becomes unable to understand the message of the Bible. How about us? Some of us are just beginner Christians (or, some of them may be future believers.) The others lead Christian life for several decades. Today's text also speaks to me. I must listen to His voice in awe.
- The author writes as below—

5:13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

What is the problem of being an infant? How can we stop drinking mother's milk and begin to eat baby food and then become to grow up to eat solid food?

Let's study the following two points today.

Main Points

1 . Daily Food for Growing up

1) What is milk and solid food?

- The author of the epistle wrote to the readers of the epistle.

5:12 You need milk, not solid food!

What does the author mean by milk and solid food? These two things are interpreted in various meanings. Some literally read them milk and solid food. I understand them as the following from the context of the epistle.

① What does *milk* refer to?

First of all, the readers were Jewish Christians. They have been given the Old Testament and came to understand that Jesus was Christ (the Messiah) through the Old Testament. It means that the teaching of the Old Testament was just a shadow of Christ. It was an elementary teaching that was taught through the Gospel of Christ. I think the author refers to it as *milk*.

② What does *solid food* refer to ?

Then, what is solid food that the author means?

It refers to the thing that comes after the fulfillment of the Gospel of Christ. It means the profound teaching that human beings can not understand by human knowledge such as the secret of Christ, the secret of the Trinity, redemption of

Christ and so on. They are very profound religious principles.

For example, **the Epistle to the Ephesians** records as below—

3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

3:18 may have power, together with all the Lord's people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

3:19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- It is very difficult to understand **“this love that surpasses knowledge”** for those who don't believe in Jesus Christ because it is solid food.

Then, what was the problem?

2) **What hinders us in growing up?**

① **Their hearts are closed.**

- To believe in Jesus Christ means to be born by God. He who was born usually keeps growing. If a Christian doesn't grow up, something is wrong with him. If he completely doesn't grow up for a long time, there is some kind of problem with him. The author said,

5:11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand.

- The Bible who translated by Rev. Reiji Oyama records as below in Chapter 5:11 —
“I have much to say about this, but I won't say any more because your hearts become too lazy to pay attention.”
- **“You no longer try to understand”(You have become dull of hearing. ESV)**
⇒ **“your hearts become closed to pay attention.”**

A Term *dull* and *closed* means neglectful, lazy, and being a lazy person.

- It means that even though they were called to meet God and were born again, they don't eagerly pursue God's amazing grace. It was just like Lot's wife who still had some lingering attachment to the world. They had their eyes opened so that they should seek what they can find, however they neglect to seek it.

③ **What preoccupies our hearts?**

- **Then, what preoccupies our hearts?**

⇒ **Worldly things preoccupy our hearts.**

It is very difficult for us to give up worldly things (We still have a sinful nature). Therefore, the time when we were newly born is important because it is the time

of full curiosity. Let's observe a small child.

- Children have doubts and ask questions to satisfy curiosity. It is natural and necessary for them. Whenever they have interests about something, they trouble us with many questions. They repeatedly ask questions. Curiosity is good for children because it is an essential thing for children to grow up. Curiosity makes people have interests in things and make them grow.
- My friends, if we have little concern about God, our hearts are preoccupied with the interests in this world. This world never satisfies interests of our flesh. It is really difficult for even Christians, who have faith in God, to resist temptations because the flesh loves this world. ⇒ **The cross of Jesus is only one way to overcome the flesh.**
- Let's think what we need to grow up. We need the Word of God, not interests in this world that occupy our heart. In His Word, God put nutrition to make us grow. Let's study the second point.

2. Daily Bread for Spiritual Growing

1) Christians who belong to flesh.

- Paul, an evangelist, records that Christians are mainly divided into two groups. They are spiritual Christians and worldly Christians. Paul records about two kinds of Christians in church of Corinth in the early church days as below—

1 Corinthians 3

3:1 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ.

3:2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

3:3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere human beings?

- It means that even Christians still had the sinful nature. Therefore, there was jealousy and quarreling among them. Some of them had anxiety and sometimes hurt others. Some believers were intrusive and tried to put themselves forward. On the contrary, some of them always hesitated to work for church or did nothing. Paul said they all were worldly Christians.
- We also see this problem in our real society. God has saved us from the old self through Christ. However, if we keep drinking milk and don't grow up, we still have the old self. This is the problem.
- And this is also an important point. The author records that such people can not

taste *the will of God*. It means that when they lead a long Christian life, they think that they understand everything so that they don't need to study anymore. (It is a very dangerous way of thinking.)

- The Bible gives us God's amazing promises. However, we don't experience most of them. The Epistle to the Hebrews, Chapter 11 records many believers who led a life in faith. Faith is to trust. Those saints experienced the grace of God by trusting in Him.
- Faith in God means to trust in God. Those who experience in faith come to be able to distinguish good from evil.

5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

- It means that those who eat solid food and grow up become able to distinguish good and evil (good things and bad things). As a result, they grow to the Christians who belong to the Spirit.

2) Christians who belong to the Spirit

- There are few Christians who can proudly come before God's Word. For example, the following God's Word requires us.

1 Thessalonians

5:16 Rejoice always,

5:17 pray continually,

5:18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

- What do you think about the Scripture above? Do we always rejoice? Do we continually pray? Do we give thanks in all circumstances? And, how about the following Scripture?

- **Luke 6**

6:27 "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

6:28 bless those who curse you, pray for those you mistreat you.

- **Romans 12**

12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

- My friends, the Scripture makes us realize that we are absolutely not such a

person.

{Illustration}

- **In Japan, there are quite a few people who are the only Christian in their family. When they live with family every day, their defects are exposed to family members. Therefore, those who are not Christians sometimes blame a Christian family member, “Who would have expected a Christian to do that?”**
- **When they point out our real attitude, we dispute their suggestion intentionally. However, if we collect ourselves, we realize our reality and how little we grow up. How about you? Have you ever experienced such a thing?**
- **However, this is a very important point. Yes, it is! Christian life begins to accept our imperfect situation (immaturity). A child can't be a mature person from the beginning. Humans begin to grow from this point. It is very important for us that our inward self grows and also spiritually grows.**
- Those who are not mature cause problems in church. Certain people want to take care of everything because they have been leading a long Christian life.
- They are infants who are still drinking milk so that they are not able to taste great teachings about God's will. If they don't grow, they can't experience the grace of God's will. Therefore, human beings need to grow.
- If they neglect going through the process of growing in spirit, they can't grow. They also are unwilling to be taught because they are immature and their hearts are closed.

My friends, it is never too late to grow. Please keep in mind that we can't grow without learning anything.

3) Five conditions for growing in faith

- Then what should we do? We need five conditions for growing in faith.
 - ① To read the Bible everyday (To get encouragement, courage, power, healing)
 - ② To pray continually (To experience the Lord)
 - ③ To give testimony (To share what we learned from the Lord)
 - ④ To faithfully follow the Lord (To follow the Lord's teaching)
 - ⑤ To earnestly lead a church life (To serve the Lord faithfully)
- My friends, there is no shortcut to growing in our spiritual life. Working steadily is the way to grow. As a result, we become growing Christians.

