

December 10, 2017

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (The Second Advent Worship)

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Joy and Delight are Prepared for You"

— The Desert and Parched Land will Burst into Bloom —

Text: Isaiah 35:3~10

35:3 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way;

35:4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.

35:5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

35:6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

35:7 The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

35:8 And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it.

35:9 No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there,

35:10 and those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Introduction

GPSs are very popular now. It is well known for being *car navigation systems* and *portable navigation systems*. A car navigation system is very convenient when we go somewhere for the first time. If we set a destination before we start, it leads us to the place with voice guidance and a map. A multilingual GPS is also available these days.

However, the car navigation system is not always 100% correct. We need to update the software according to road conditions and traffic patterns. One time, when I have followed the GPS, I was led down a one way street. If I had kept going straight on the street, I would have had a head-on collision with a passenger car.

- However, God is not like a GPS. He is perfect. He who guides our ways of life is the perfect God and besides, He leads us to the destination (Heaven) safely. That God chose one nation to show the world who He was. This is Israel. He revealed His plan, His *master plan*, through the people of Israel. And God loves this nation and its people very much.
- In today's text, Isaiah Chapter 35, God revealed His will to the Israelites. God foretold the future of the Israelites through Isaiah the prophet in about BC 8. As you know, God loves them and chose them. However, Isaiah prophesied that the Israelites would be captured and taken to Babylon.
- But even in that circumstance they had a *light of hope*. ⇒ Isaiah Chapter 35 focuses on mainly 3 points.
 - ① Salvation of the Israelites, ② Restoration of Jerusalem, ③ Coming of the new Heaven and Earth.

35:1 The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus,

35:2 it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.

The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God.

- The Bible says that the desert and the parched land **“will blossom like the crocus”**. It is unbelievable! The crocuses have been used as perfume and dyes in the days before Christ in Europe. In Ancient Greece, the crocus’ yellow was very precious and it was called a royal color. (It is said they were brought to Japan in the Edo period as medicine.)
 - The pistils of the crocuses are dried and used as spice and medicine. They have peculiar smell and take on vivid yellow in water. As they are hard to gather they are very valuable. It is 500~1000 yen per 1 gram. God foretold that the desert and the parched land **“will blossom like the crocus”**.
 - ⇒ What joy! What delight!
- **“The desert and the parched land will blossom”** ⇒ The prophecy of restoration of Israel. Let’s consider the land of Israel. Lebanon, the north part, Carmel, the middle part and Sharon, the Mediterranean side are rich land of crops. My friends, the Bible records that the desert and the parched land will turn into a beautiful and rich land like Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon.
 - And God foretold that the Israelites would see it. This prophecy was partially fulfilled since the Foundation of Israel in 1948. Jewish people who were dispersed over the world returned to the Negev desert, the southern part of Palestine. They have managed farms (kibbutz) and irrigated the desert and planted. Now, the Negev desert is called *the Negev plain* and full of greens and flowers. People settled in it and formed a community.
- Ben-Gurion, the first Prim Minister of Israel said, **“The future of Israel depends on how far we exploit the desert.”** They really needed faith. Now, the Negev desert turns into the Negev plain as the prophecy said, **the desert and the parched land will blossom.** Therefore, the Bible prophesied, “Rejoice!” because, they will see God’s glory.
- * Today’s text, Isaiah Chapter 35, teaches us the following three important points.

Main Points

1. God Encourages People.

Isaiah encouraged the Israelites with God’s message by receiving God’s Spirit.

35:3 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way;

35:4 say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.”

- God spoke to the Israelites who were dispersed and lost their nation. They were in despair and hopeless. They experienced despair, powerlessness, persecution, discrimination and dismay. However, God told them, **“God will come to save you.”** It means that Israel will be dismayed but He also encouraged in international society.
- The word **“Be strong, do not fear”** is often heard between God and the Israelites since they have left Egypt. God always encourages them, **“Be strong, do not fear.”**
- And, these Words of God also encourage people in every generation. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks to the believers who are persecuted because of faith.

12:12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.

12:13 “Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

- * When we receive God's Word of encouragement ⇒ We need faith in God.
When we receive the word of prophecy ⇒ We need in faith.

2. God Promised People to Restore.

- God promised the Israelites His heavenly blessing. And He said that He will show it by physical phenomena as below—

35:5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

35:6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

35:7 The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

- Isaiah Chapter 29 records as below—

29:17 In a very short time, will not Lebanon be turned into a fertile field and the fertile field seem like a forest?

29:18 In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.

29:19 Once more the humble will rejoice in the Lord; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

- These Words are prophecies of physical restoration; the wilderness will be restored and blessed again. When Jesus came to this world 2000 years ago, the delight was brought to the world. It (the first coming of Jesus) means foretaste of the delight that is coming to the Israelites in future.
- It is written that on that day the lame will leap like a deer and in the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. Jackals are animals of 65~106 cm like wolves. Jackals' tails are 20~41cm and ears are large and hairs are yellow-brown. Jackals' hair on their backs and tails are blackish. Jackals are crepuscular and a proficient scavenger and hunt rats and hares. Jackals are generally found in packs of 1~6 individuals and inhabit in grass plains and dried woodland. Jackals are good at digging holes in the ground and breed 4~6 cubs. The Bible records that in the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.
- Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. ⇒ Water is very precious in the wilderness. **Isaiah Chapter 41**
41:18 I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.
- **Israel will be absolutely restored. ⇒ This is the promise of the Bible.**

- * When God steps in the world, the wilderness and the desert will shine with His glory. There is restoration and hope.

3. God Gives People Blessing.

- God promises the believers the following great blessing.

35:8 And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it.

35:10 and those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

- When God's glory reveals itself, it is the time that the world transforms. The spiritual order will be restored.
- Three key words : ① the way of Holiness, ② those the Lord has rescued, ③ singing with joy

1) <The way of Holiness>

<Holiness> is one of God's natures. It means sacred, righteous and pure white without any spot. Nothing can compare with the whiteness. The way to Zion (Jerusalem) in heaven is *the way of Holiness*. The Way of Holiness from over the world will be ready and on that Way only the people who were redeemed by God can walk. God prepares the Way of Holiness for those who were redeemed.

2) <Those who are rescued>

The original meaning is *to buy back*.

- In the case of property **Leviticus**

25:25 "If anyone among you becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold."

Ruth

4:4 "I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line." I will redeem it, he said."

- In the case of slaves **Leviticus**

25:48 they retain the right of redemption after they have sold themselves. One of their relatives may redeem them:

25:49 An uncle or a cousin or any blood relative in their clan may redeem them. Or if any of them prosper, they may redeem themselves.

When they can not buy back with money ⇒ *to avenge* with blood

Deuteronomy 19:12 the killer shall be sent for by the town elders, be brought back from the city, and be handed over to the avenger of blood to die.

- Like this, *those who are rescued* are those who are bought back.

Exodus

6:6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.'

- God himself rescued the lost ones with His blood. This is the work of Jesus who redeemed. *The Way of Holiness* to heaven is prepared for *those who were redeemed*.
- The another meaning of *those who were redeemed* is as below —

Isaiah

35:10 and those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

- *Those who were rescued* also means *to be released*.

Deuteronomy 7:8 But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the

oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

- Isaiah used many ways of expression for the word *redeem* like this. God, ① redeems the lost one by His blood and ② releases the lost one from the enemy. Isaiah the prophet praised God's work in chapter 35. The praising song is really beautiful to reach heaven.
- However, the significance of *redemption* is more important. God sent His only one Son to this world. ⇒ to fulfill *His redemption*.

Revelation

21:27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

3) <Singing with joy>

- Isaiah prophesied as below—

7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

"Immanuel" (God with us). This is the Christmas prophecy. Jesus Christ was born after 800 years. This prophecy was fulfilled. *Immanuel* was fulfilled.

- Those who were cleansed by the blood of the Lamb are *those who were redeemed* and walk *the Way of Holiness*. They walk *singing with joy*.
Hallelujah!

{Illustration} **Diaspora Jewish People**

In 1948, the foundation of Israel was fulfilled as the prophecy foretold. Diaspora Jews began to return to their father's country. And in November 9, 1989 the Berlin Wall collapsed. Since that time, history has strongly moved.

- **More than a million Jews returned to Israel from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe countries. I saw Diaspora Jews kissing on the ground at Tel Aviv airport and at Haifa harbor. How impressive!**
- Their returning teaches us that sometime we will also return to Jerusalem in Heaven(Zion). We will be full of joy when we enter the new Heaven and Earth. Therefore, let's pray to God that we can strengthen our feeble arms and weak knees.
- Christmas is coming soon. We would like to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ the Savior with joy and thanksgiving.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "Joy and Delight are Prepared for You"

—The Desert and Parched Land will Burst into Bloom—

- God gave His message to the Israelites through Isaiah, even though they were unfaithful. It was *God's blessing*. Isaiah Chapter 35 teaches us the promise of God's blessing.
- Today we have the Second Sunday of Advent. The birth of Jesus Christ brings us *joy and delight*. He gives the wonderful message to those who believe in God.
 1. God encourages people.
 2. God promises people restoration.
 3. God gives His blessing to people.

* God bless you!