

January 28, 2018

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "What Do You Boast About?"

—By Faith—

Text: Hebrews 11:32

11:32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets,

Introduction

- Do we have anything to *boast* about? The term boast is used to show two opposite meanings: positive and negative. The former motivates our interest to do something. It makes us improve in a good sense. The latter (a boastful talk, fortune, wealth, status, etc) is quite the opposite. Those who boast too much about themselves become haughty and make people around uncomfortable.
- We who trust in God also *boast*. The positive boast is agreeable and it makes our faith grow. Christians are also quite different. We should never be like the latter. *The boast* sometimes makes us improve and sometimes makes us fall down. What do we boast about? We need to *boast* correctly.
- By the way, we learn many things from examples in today's text. Before we study them, let's think about the order that they come to appear in the text.
- The author of the Epistle mentioned the names of the forerunners in faith in the days of the Old Testament and recorded their lives *by faith*. However, he said that he never had enough time to mention all their names.

11:32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets,

He records the names of six people: Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel.

- Their names are not recorded according to chronological order. The reason is not clear but it is said that the author might picked the people who lived *by faith* off the top of his head. Let's study God's will according to the names that are written in the text.

Main Points

1. Those Whom God Boasts About

1) Gideon

- We know Gideon as the brave, however, he was not at first. Rather, he was a coward. Fearing an attack by the Midianites, he was secretly threshing wheat in a winepress.

Judges 6

6:14 The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and

save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"

- Gideon heard the Word of God. However, he couldn't willingly follow it because he was afraid. The angel of the Lord appeared again and said,

Judges 6

6:16 The Lord answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive."

- Gideon couldn't trust in the Word, so he asked for a sign from the Lord.

6:17 Gideon replied, "If I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me."

- The Lord answered Gideon. The sign was fire flaming from the rock, consuming the meat and bread without yeast. Then, finally he understood that he met the Lord and began to follow Him.
- He was caught by the Lord's Spirit and changed into a fearless judge. As a human being he had weakness (cowardice), but when he stood up *by faith*, he and his three hundred men defeated one hundred thirty thousand and five hundred men of the Midianites and the Amalekites. Gideon is the man whom the Lord *boasts* about.

2) Barak

- Barak was an indecisive man. The Israelites were under control of Jabin King of Canaan. Sisera, who was the commander of the king's army, had nine hundred chariots and tortured the Israelites. At that time, Deborah, who was a woman prophet, sent for Barak and said to him as below:

Judges 4

4:6 She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor.

4:7 I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'"

- However, Barak replied her,
- 4:8 Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go."**
- Barak, who was a leader, said if Deborah went with him, he would go. What a coward Barak was!
 - My friends. Why did the Lord choose Barak, who was an indecisive man? On the contrary, why wasn't Deborah, who was a prophet and judge, chosen for the task? We can't understand God's will. The Bible records as below—

4:9 "Certainly I will go with you (Barak)," said Deborah. "But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours (Barak), for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman (Deborah)."

- It was a disagreeable Word for Barak as the leader. However, he marched on

even though he heard it. We understand that he sought the victory for the Lord and His people, not his own honor. The Lord highly regards a man like Barak, who was the indecisive man but lived *by faith*.

3) Samson

- The author also picked Samson. His choice is something questionable. Because, he did not always live a good life. He was born to be a Nazirite, an Israelite, dedicated to God. A Nazirite had to live a clean life, because he was dedicated to God.
- Nazirites:
 - ① They must abstain from wine and other fermented drink. (Numbers 6:3,4)
 - ② No razor may be used on their head. (Numbers 6:5)
 - ③ They must not go near a dead body. (Numbers 6:6~8)
- Nevertheless, Samson married a young Philistine, who was a Gentile. On top of that, he went in to spend the night with a prostitute. However, Samson could defeat the Philistines. It was unbelievable.
- **Why did the Lord use someone like Samson?**
He was a Nazirite, who was the man the Lord made the covenant with. (He promised.)

Samson probably saw the examples of Nazirites, who lived by faith.

4) Jephthah

- Why did the author decidedly choose Jephthah? There must have been better examples who lived *by faith*. Jephthah was, if anything, a thoughtless man. On top of that, he was a son of a prostitute. Therefore, he was bullied and driven away by sons of his father's lawful wife. A gang of scoundrels gathered around him.
- Sometime later, the Ammonites were fighting against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah to save them from the Ammonites. He wouldn't go with them. However, he finally stood up to fight them in response to elders' summons for help. At that time, he made a vow to the Lord.

Judges 11

11:30 And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord: "If you give the Ammonites into my hands,

11:31 whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."

- In this way, he went over to fight the Ammonites and subdued them. When he returned to his home, he found his only one daughter came to meet him. There are several views on the daughter's life, whether she was sacrificed as Jephthah vowed or she dedicated her life to the Lord without marrying.
- However, the reason that Jephthah was mentioned here as the brave and faithful man was

that he probably carried out the vow to the Lord faithfully. Of course, he was mentioned as brave in faith because he defeated the Ammonites and saved the Lord's people. However, he absolutely fulfilled the vow once he made to the Lord even though he was said to be thoughtless. We understand his faith in God here.

5) David

- David is well known as the representative king of Israel. However, he also had weaknesses. He failed many times in his life. The most sinful one was murder. When David came to the throne and exercised his authority, he committed adultery. He tried to hide the sin and committed murder. It was his greatest sin. The great king had other weaknesses and committed sins.
- However, his great point was that he didn't varnish his sin by taking his authority when Nathan, the prophet, rebuked him. David could have turned it aside, but he became humble before God, admitted his sin in public, confessed it and repented.

2 Samuel

12:13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."

- He who was king admitted his sin, confessed it and repented. Such conduct was beneath his dignity. However, he became humble before God without paying his authority as a king.

6) Samuel

- Samuel, the prophet, was also a great worker of God. He also had weaknesses. He ministered before the Lord under Eli the priest. Eli was the great leader, but he failed to educate his two sons. They were priests but they were scoundrels.

1 Samuel

2:12 Eli's sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the Lord.

2:13 Now it was the practice of the priest...

- They didn't serve God correctly as priests and also did immoral conducts with women who worked at the entrance of the God's Tabernacle.

2:17 This sin of the young men was great in the Lord's sight, for they were treating the Lord's offering with contempt.

8:3 But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.

- These two sons were killed by God for their sins. On the contrary, Samuel faithfully kept leading the Israelites. When the Philistines attacked the Holy Place and captured the ark of the Lord's covenant from Shiloh. Samuel encouraged the Israelites that even though the ark was taken by the Philistine, God went on with them. And when the ark of the Lord was sent back, Samuel placed it far from their town and made the Israelites focus on God Himself, not on the ark.
- Like this, Samuel instructed the Israelites. He also poured olive oil on Saul's head and made him king. When Saul was denied by the Lord, Samuel made David king

by pouring olive oil. Like this, Samuel guided the Israelites throughout his life.

- The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews mentioned six saints now. Then he also mentioned the prophets like Elijah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah and so on. However, he said he had not enough time to mention all the names. A large number of people lived *by faith*.

2. Those Who Boast Through God's Evaluation

1) Our Boast

We are spiritual descendants of Abraham. We are descendants of the forerunners who lived by faith. We should boast our forerunners who are great people in faith. We can boast in a positive manner. In addition, we can live *by faith* like them. How happy we are!

- The Lord is faithful. He gave power and helped our forerunners who walked by faith. God is alive now and He can willingly give the same power to us like them. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews must teach us this important lesson.

2) Those Who have the Real Boast

- Let's review the six forerunners again now.

Gideon ⇒ He was the coward and hid himself. However, he defeated one hundred thirty thousand and five hundred men. God valued his faith.

Barak ⇒ He was an indecisive man. He was not a judge like the woman Prophet Deborah. When he lived *by faith*, the Lord valued him.

Samson ⇒ He was a Nazirite dedicated to God. He married a Gentile and had relations with a prostitute. However, the Lord valued him when he kept fighting throughout a life

Jephthah ⇒ He lived unhappy in society. However, he was valued by keeping the vow to the Lord to the end.

David ⇒ He who was the king of Israel committed a very big sin, but he repented before the Lord and became the great king. His way of life was valued.

Samuel ⇒ He was fostered by Eli the priest. He was different from Eli's sons. He was evaluated and was found to be faithfully following the Lord's work.

- The ways of the six forerunners were different but they all lived *by faith*. We also have weaknesses like them. Then, what can we *boast* about?

The reason that they were valued by God was not for their human greatness. Those who became children of God by the Abrahamic Covenant *boast* in their *weaknesses*.

- Therefore, human *boasting* refers to human *weakness*.

Paul the apostle said as below — 2 Corinthians

12:5 I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself,

except about my weakness.

12:9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christa’s power may rest on me.”

- If we mention human weaknesses, we should *boast* our *weaknesses*.

What do you think about our weaknesses? How do we accept our weaknesses?

⇒ The time when our stubborn selves are broken

(When we accept our helplessness)

We don’t want to show our human *weaknesses*. However, Christians who trust in God are allowed to have *weaknesses*. We need to faithfully follow the Lord by faith even though we are cowards and indecisive and make many mistakes.

The Lord prepares blessings from heaven for us.

Conclusion

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—By Faith—

Today, we studied faith of six forerunners. We learned wonderful lessons:

- 1 . We should not *boast* in our human greatness.
- 2 . We should *boast* in our human *weaknesses*.

12:9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christa’s power may rest on me.”

2 Corinthians

* God bless you !