

February 25, 2018
KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Title of the Message: "Keep Fixing Your Eyes on Jesus."
—The Secret of the Victorious Life—

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Text: Hebrews 12:1~3

12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

12:3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart

Introduction

- Every program on T.V. will report that today is the last of the 17 days of the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeong-Chang. Japanese athletes were greatly successful, especially the Men's Figure Skater, Yuzuru Hanyu, who became a gold medal winner. It was amazing that Nao Kodaira won the Women's 500 Meter gold in Speed Skating. They both said, "It is thanks to everyone that I was able to come this far."

- We were in breathless suspense over the outcome of each final match. Actually, the highest viewing rate was said to be 46%. As Hanyu won the championship two years in a row, his commemorative stamp was issued. This cheerful news gave us power and encouragement.

- We enjoyed the 2018 Winter Olympics and the Tokyo Olympics will be held in two years. Athletes from all over the world will practice with great zeal for the Tokyo Olympics. One highlight of the Olympics is a marathon race and people over the world will be interested in and pay attention. We have great expectations for the Tokyo Olympics.

- By the way, the Bible compares our Christian lives to a marathon race.

12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, (The New Japanese Bible)

12:1 Like this, as a great number of people who walked by faith watch us as if they are spectators sitting at the stadium of an athletic field, let us desperately run the race of faith. (The Contemporary Japanese Bible)

- The author of the Epistle cited many examples of forerunners who lived by faith in Chapter 11. Some of them were well-known and some of them were not. There are countless forerunners in faith and some of them are our family members, acquaintances and friends.

- The verse above records that they are sitting at a stadium and watching our Christian lives. They may say, "They live good lives in faith," or "They are doing such a silly thing." Christians who has already gone to heaven and live with the Lord are watching us. On the top of that, those who lived the victorious lives on earth help and support us.

- Therefore, the author of the Epistle encourages, "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us," (12:1) Let's study how we are able to live victorious Christian lives today according to the following two points.

Main Points

1. Looking at the Course of Christian Life God Marked Out for Us

12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the *race marked out for us*. (The New Japanese Bible)

12:1 For this reason, we have this large crowd of witnesses around us. So then, let us also lay aside every weight, and sins which clings so closely, and let us run with determination *the race that is set before us*. (The Bible, the New Interconfessional Translation)

- God prepares the course of our Christian lives and it is **the only** way to go. However, it also is not the easy course.
- We are able to finish the course if we work hard. This course is the one that God has given to us to complete.
- Then, how should we run the course of our Christian lives? The author of the Epistle advises to do the following three points.

1) Throwing Off Everything that Hinders

- If we want win the race, we should be lightly clothed. We can't run by holding unnecessary things. No one runs putting on leather shoes or carrying **baggage**.
- In this way, we need to throw off *things that hinder us*. What are **the things that hinder us**? They are burdens in our Christian lives. We have various burdens. One of them is life's worries. We all worry to a greater or lesser degree when we live. How about you?
 - When we worry, we exhaust our spiritual power.
 - When we assert our rights and pursue our own interests, they hinder our sound Christian lives.
- Jealousy, hatred, bitter feeling to others, lies, deceit, judging people, **words of malice**... all of them hinder our race, our Christian lives. They become burdens **to our** Christian lives, so that we need to throw them off.

2) Throwing Off the Sin that Entangles Us

- It is natural that the sin hinders our Christian lives. It skillfully traps us. The Scripture refers it as, '**the sin entangles**'. Satan comes to tempt us by using our flesh and lust. He works on our innate selfishness. He first invites us to a trivially thoughtless conduct and finally pulls into hopeless **situations** and makes us **entangled** with sin.
- The term entangle refers **to be easily tempted** and **to cling very closely**. Human beings are so weak that they repeat same things even if they **decide** not to do **it** again.

{Illustration} - 108 Tolls

- **We often listen to one hundred and eight strokes of the Buddhist temple bells at midnight on New Year's Eve. These tolls refer to the 108 Kinds of Human Worldly Desires. These desires afflict humans' bodies and souls. It is said that human beings have 108 or 84 thousand desires. Humans are so easily steeped in vice and have to fight various battles in life.**

- Many Japanese pray to be released by listening the temple bells. *The sin that so easily entangles refers to **entangling the race that marked out for us. It refers to our battles of faith.***

- However, we have powerful hope; the One (God) is present who has great power and always encourage us. Therefore, we are able to throw off the **entangling** sins. We **must** study another important thing.

3) Run the Race with Perseverance.

- We should keep running with perseverance. You may think that perseverance means just to be patient and **that a** patient life must be hard one. No, Christian life is not like this.
- Marathon runners need perseverance and they keep it by **training daily**. However, our **Christian courses** are the *races that God marked out for us*. Those who are given faith by God can keep running.
- That is not all. Our great forerunners who finished the race by faith took **seats at the heavenly** stadium and encourage us, "Keep running! Never give up!" **By hearing** their cheer and encouragement, we can run with perseverance.
- These three points are important points to run the race that God marked out for us: ① to throw off everything that hinders, ② to throw off the sin, ③ to keep running with perseverance.

2 Keep Fixing Your Eyes on Jesus

1. Keep Fixing

12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- To throw off things that hinder and the sin that tangles us and to run with perseverance are very important, however, the most important thing is *to focus on Jesus*. This is the secret of the victorious Christian life.
- Then, why should we *focus on Jesus* ? Because, Jesus gives us faith in God and completes our faith. Therefore, we need to throw off things that distract our mind and heart. And we must *focus on Jesus*.
- Now, let's think about the term *fix on* **in the following translations:**

The Japanese New Bible: "**Fixing our eyes on Jesus**"

The Bible, the New Interconfessional Translation: "**Looking at Jesus**"

The Contemporary Japanese Bible: "**Look away things that distract our heart and mind...looking at Jesus...**"

- Each translation is very good. The term is a compound word, *aforontes*: afro (away from) and rontes (look). It teaches us to keep fixing our eyes on Jesus.

① To Understand the Purpose of Faith

- Then, why should we keep fixing our eyes on Jesus? Because, the Lord Jesus gives us faith and completes our faith. **The purpose of our faith should be the** Lord Jesus.
- What do you have faith **in**? When we consider it, we understand that faith is given by God. The selfish faith is not of the one that God gives us. A certain man may be baptized because he wants to be a person of character. However, the purpose that God gave and saved us **for** is to understand the Lord Jesus. The purpose is to get to know Jesus **more and better.**

- The more we understand the Lord Jesus is, the more our lives become satisfied. At the same time, we gradually understand the reason why we are given lives and what our purposes are. Therefore, we need to understand the Lord Jesus well.

② Looking Up At Jesus

- Then, what is Jesus like? The author of the Epistle records as below—

12:2 For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Why did Jesus willingly accept **crucifixion, the** cruelest death penalty? Because Jesus was happy to save us **from sin**. The Bible records as below—

12:3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart

- My friends! Fixing our eyes on Jesus is **so**, **“that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”**
- This is our serious problem of people today. Many people are exhausted with human relations in their social lives. There are many working people who get tired out, but the number of industrial doctors is small. Some of them become physically sick caused by mental diseases. The Bible teaches the way **to not become** fatally exhausted. **The way is** to focus on Jesus Christ.

- I mentioned that our Christian lives are compare to the marathon race. Some people may **quit during** the marathon race and **give way** to their solitary fight. Like the marathon race, when we lead Christian lives we sometimes **think**, **“Why** we should experience such hardship?” so that we grow weary and lose heart.

- And we sometimes wonder why God does not answer our **prayers**, but He answers other people’s **prayers**. When you doubt God’s grace, please remember Jesus who was taken to Caiaphas and **sentenced to death**. The Bible records as below—

The Gospel of Matthew 26:67 Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him

26:68 and said, “Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?”

- They didn’t understand who Jesus was. They treated Jesus cruelly. How foolish they were. How could they, who were created by God, do such a cruel conduct to God, the Creator?

2) Having Complete Trust

- Jesus knew everything but He didn’t retaliate against them. He endured completely. Why **did** He do it? Peter records as below—

1Peter 2:22 “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”

- Jesus could patiently endure everything, because He completely trusted in God (Father God in **H**eaven), who will judge righteously **in the end**. On the contrary, we can’t trust in God the Father who finally judges righteously, therefore, we can’t endure cruel treatment and unreasonable things.

- We think that we must not let such a person go. This isn’t fair. We should punish him instead of God. As a result, our battle **drags** on endlessly and we finally **become** exhausted. The Bible teaches as below—

12:3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose hear.

- Peter records as below—

1Peter 2:21 To this you were called, because Christs suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

- My friends! This is the secret **to avoid becoming** involved in a conflict. We **try** to fight back by our selfish **ways**. This is our nature. We are not able to win through our nature.
- Let's learn the examples of Christ and live the correct way of life according to the purpose **for which** God saved us. Let's keep fixing our eyes on Jesus Christ and live in the example of Christ. This is the secret of the victorious Christian life that God marks **out for each of** us.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "Keep Fixing Your Eyes on Jesus."

—The Secret of the Victorious Life—

- Today, we studied the secret of the victorious life. The Scripture **teaches** that we should keep fixing our eyes on Jesus to live **a** victorious life. The following two points are concrete ways to live victoriously.

1. We should keep fixing our eyes on Jesus Christ.
2. We should completely trust in God, the Father in **H**eaven.

God **B**less you!