

April 15, 2018

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "The One Whom We Could Draw Near To"

—How Wonderful is the Kingdom of Heaven!—

Text: Hebrews 12:18~24

12:18 You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm;

12:19 to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them,

12:20 because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death."

12:21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,

12:23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

12:24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Introduction

• Everyone has bitter experiences in his or her life. I also have an unforgettable experience when I was a schoolboy. One of my friend's father ran an electrical store. One day I went to his house, which was his father's store.

• He picked up a light bulb and showed me an experiment of how an electric current flows. It was about 60 years ago and we had no fluorescent light or LED bulbs at that time. And there was no such thing as an electronics retail store so we usually bought a light bulb at the electrical store.

• When they sold an light bulb, they checked it by screwing it into a socket. If the bulb was good, an electric current flowed. Of course, if an electric switch was not on, the light bulb didn't light.

• One day, my friend played a trick on me. He first switched off the socket and put his finger into it. I understood the electric current didn't flow. Then, he told me, "Put your finger here. It is safe."

• I put my finger into the socket as he told me. At that very moment I cried out, "Oh!"

as I was struck by 100 volts. My friend secretly switched on.

- My friends! I can laugh at it now, but I was really shocked at that time. It was a bitter experience for me. Since then, I am afraid of an electric shock and I feel uneasy to come near to the place where the electric current flows and to touch it.

- Our bitter experiences like this usually make us worry. How about you?

Do you have any experience like me? I don't think you probably had such a mischievous friend.

- We sometimes hear, "You should not get close to that man!" Maybe, there is some reason. Then, what does it mean, to get close to? By the way, when we carefully read the Bible, we find that the author of the Epistle records two opposite terms, to draw near to and not draw near to. Let's take a look at these two terms today.

Main Points

1. *To Draw Near or To Not Draw Near*

- The Bible records things that Israel should get closer to, and things that they should not get closer to from Chapter 12 to Chapter 18. Then, what were they to do?

1) Things They Should Not Draw Near To

- The Israelites came to the Desert of Sinai three months after they left Egypt. Moses was called by God to go up Mount Sinai and he was given the Ten Commandments.

- Exodus Chapter 19 records the event above. The author records as below—

12:18 In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day.

12:19 For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And anyone, whether foreigner or native-born, who eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel.

12:20 Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread.

12:21 Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb.

- My friends. The Ten Commandments was given in a fearful situation. The reason for the fearful situation was to teach God's holiness and majesty to the Israelites.

Therefore, whoever came to the mountain, where God was present, they must be put to death. God told Moses to come up the mountain alone. If he didn't follow God's command, he would have been killed.

- Then, why did God give the Ten Commandments in such a way? The reason was to

teach how horrible the wages of sin are. God didn't allow sinful human beings to come close to the Holy God. At the same time, the author of the Epistle records the things to draw near to below—

2) Things They Should Draw Near To

12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,

12:23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

12:24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

- The author records what they should draw near to. The term *to*, that indicates direction, is used many times in the English Bible. What things should they draw near to? ⇒ "To Mount Zion", "to the city of the living God", "the heavenly Jerusalem", "to thousands upon thousands of angels to God", "to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven", "the Judge of all", "to the spirits of the righteous made perfect", "to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant" and "to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."

- My friends, we understand the difference between Moses the prophet and Jesus Christ the Savior. Mt. Sinai, where Moses was given the Ten Commandments, was a fearful place.

12:21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

- On the contrary, the heavenly Jerusalem, that Jesus promised, is a great place. What can we learn from the Scripture now? It teaches us that we are able to reach the place where we had been not been allowed to go. We are able to get there through God's grace, not through the law or our deeds.

- Then, what is it like to draw near through grace?

2. Jesus Christ is Whom We Can Draw Near To

1) It Is Impossible to Come to Him through the Law.

- First of all, we should learn that we can't come to God through the Law. The Law that was given to Moses on Mount Sinai was the perfect one. The place was a fearful place of fire, darkness, gloom and storm. Every man should absolutely fear that place.

- God who judged people's sin by the Law was fearful One and difficult to come near to. Even today some people think God is like this. Therefore, they worry that God judges their sins so that they don't come to Him. It is true that God is the Judge.

- Now, we should understand that human beings cannot perfectly follow the Law, despite how hard they may work. It means that through the Law they can't become the being that God wants.

- Then, why did God give the Law to human beings?

Galatians 3:24 So the law was put in charge of us until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

The law was the tutor who guided human beings. Its purpose was to teach that they can't come to God through the Law. They only become righteous before God by faith.

2) Becoming God's Children Through His Grace

① The Privilege of Grace

12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,

- The Verse above means the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the New Jerusalem that is recorded in Revelation, Chapter 21, verse 9 to Chapter 22, verse 5.

12:23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, the church of the firstborn is the first church. The names of those who believed in God and were given Salvation of Christ are written there.

Jesus said in Luke 10:20 "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

- The names of God's children are written in the Book of Life. And it is the privilege that was given by God's grace. Why are we given such privilege? It is because God the Almighty came to this world by taking an appearance of a man, Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are able to come to God without fear.

Jesus said in John 14:6 "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

- The author of the Epistle continues as below—

12:24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

A new covenant was made by the blood of Christ that was superior to the blood of Abel and also the blood of the goats, sheep or bulls.

- We are allowed to come to Jesus Christ. Jesus opened the way to God for us, not through the Law. We are able to come to God only by faith in Jesus Christ.

- We couldn't come to God, therefore, God Himself came to us and the names of believers are written on the Book of Life. It is the privilege that is given by God's grace.

God gives also another blessing by his grace.

② Hope by God's Grace

- God shows us the wonderful heaven. Our Christian lives are like marathon races so we need power to keep running. If we don't know the goal, we will be exhausted on the way and we may fail to keep running.

- Churches of this world are not perfect, because, salvation of each church member has not yet be fulfilled (it is completed after finishing lives on this world). Therefore, we fail and are sometimes defeated. We often hurt people around us. We sometimes can't forgive people. And we feel desperate and hopeless.

- If we only focus on such negative things, we feel like giving up the race. Therefore, it is important for us to see the immediate purpose, which is to reach the goal.

- Let's look at verses 18 and 22. They are written in the present perfect tense (have come). It means that the important thing has surely happened. It doesn't mean that it will happen sometime in future. It teaches that we already have the Kingdom in Heaven in us in our Christian lives right now.

- We Christians need to understand that we live in a heavenly position in Christ in this present world or we drift between legalism and materialism.

- Therefore, if we don't have fellowship with God and only pay attention to the worldly things, we naturally come to live worldly. Then, we try to get heavenly things by our own power and we eventually trapped by legalism. We should always remember that we are associated with Heaven through God's grace.

- The Kingdom in Heaven is a beautiful and amazing place. Sinners can't come to the holy God of Majesty. They will be struck and horrified. However, we are allowed to come to the merciful God with joy and thanks without fear through the grace of Jesus Christ.

- On top of that, we will see Jesus Christ. Now, we see only a reflection but we shall clearly see Him face to face.

1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

- The more we understand the Kingdom in Heaven, the more we can get power to keep running the race. When we experience this, we are given a conviction of salvation and live stable Christian lives.

- As we understand how great the Kingdom in Heaven is and realize it, our Christian lives become joyful and full of life. Therefore, let's experience more and understand

how wonderful the Kingdom is.

- Then how can we realize blessings of Heaven? We understand it by the Word of God. The Word of God is food for our lives. The Holy Spirit teaches us the secret of Heaven
⇒ We should be quiet before God every day and have precious fellowship with the Lord.
- Let's sincerely give thanks for the privilege and hope that are given by God's grace.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "The One Whom We Could Draw Near To"

—How Wonderful is the Kingdom of Heaven!—

- We listened to the precious voice of the Lord by faith today. What do you think about today's message?
What do we draw near to? Do we draw near to Jesus Christ who opened the way to live by grace, not by the Law?
- Let's reflect on the important things we learned today.
 1. We can't go get to Heaven through the Law.
 2. We can get to Heaven by grace.
- Let's pray that we draw near to the Lord and understand the blessings of Heaven more and more through the Word of God and help of the Holy Spirit.

* God Bless You !