

May 27, 2018
KIBC Sunday Worship Service
Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda
Title of the Message: "Christ Never Changes"
— In the Past, in the Present and in the Future—

Text: Hebrews 13:7, 8

13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Introduction

Human beings grow by being influenced by other people. We generally spend a lot of time with our families. Therefore, we are greatly influenced by our families. Parents have a great deal of influence over their children for better or worse. It is a big surprise to see a small child who imitates his or her parents' behavior and way of speaking. It is said that when you see the children, you can see their home.

My friends, it is nearly impossible that good children grow in the family that their father is alcoholic and mother scolds her husband severely. However, some children turn out all right, because they are influenced by some other good people. Sometimes their parents work as a negative example which shows the child see the error of their ways.

Those who influence children may some of their relatives, their neighbors, teachers at school and some characters of books or T.V. It means that those who turned out as good people were influenced by other good people even though they were in terrible situations.

I believed in Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and was baptized at the age of 14. I have been a Christian for 56 years since then. My parents were Christians and I'm sure that they had influence over me. However, I accepted Jesus Christ at a Christian Bible Camp. We enjoyed sports, sang songs, made a campfire, listened to the messages and I accepted Jesus Christ at that time.

By the way, the church I belonged to at that time was called an assembly. Its' members believed that their assembly was a biblical one. I was sure that they faithfully followed the Bible and had very solid faith. Some elder Christian said, "Our group is a lineal Jerusalem church." And I believed what he said. They didn't play any musical instruments at the worship services. Women didn't utter even a single word during worship services and meetings. No cross was hung on the church building. Men and Women usually sat separately. They didn't have any pastors. Of course, it is impossible for women to give sermons and encouragements from the sanctuary.

However, God miraculously sent me to a German University to study, about 48 years ago. Japan had a high economic growth period at that time. I began to attend a German church. I was really shocked by the great differences between my group and church in Germany. Until then, I was taught the Bible legalistically; I must not do this and I must not do that. I must do such and such. On the other hand, the German church I attended was very free. At first, I didn't understand German conversation, so I only saw surface differences. However, I gradually understood the language and conversations a few years later. I began to have fellowship with young and elder Christians and I realized that there were many good Christians outside of my past assembly. It was as if the scales fell from my eyes. It was the moment that my spiritual eyes opened. I was greatly influenced by Christians in Germany. I felt ashamed of my narrow mind. After that, God called me to do interdenominational ministry and guided to plant Duesseldorf Japanese Christian Church. It was really a miraculous experience for me.

I have been influenced by faith like this and now I serve God as the pastor of Kitahama Church and speak sermons every Sunday. I really give thanks to God. I am happy that I have fellowships with friends in faith, who influence me even now.

By the way, the author of the Epistle records in Chapter 13, Verse 7 as below—

13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

We grow by the influence of somebody else. How about you?

The author of the Epistle teaches, "**Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you.**"

Now, let's think about the following two points.

Main Points

1. Remember the Faith of Your Leaders.

13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

- **The leaders Who Teach the Word of God**

We are taught here that the leaders of the church teach the Word of God. Paul, the aged apostle, taught Timothy, his beloved disciple, as below—

2 Timothy 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

It is very important to understand and study the Bible correctly. If they don't understand the Bible, they can't teach it correctly. If they don't teach the Bible correctly, the hearers would become complacent. Therefore, it is very important to understand the Bible correctly.

Jesus taught about people who build their lives in faith on the Word and those who don't do by telling a parable as below—

Matthew 7:24 Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

7:25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

7:26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

7:27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

We learn from the parable the importance of Christian lives built on the Word of God. Therefore, it is very important that the leaders teach the Word correctly. On the other hand, those who listen to the Word tend to favor a good story, a happy story and an interesting story, but if they really love God and listen to His Word sincerely, they would clearly understand all of God's Word.

Those who read the Bible at devotion time and apply it to their Christian lives every day, they easily understand if the word of the leaders and the Bible, the Word of God accord.

2) Remember Your Leaders.

The author of the Epistle records the term leader (*Vorsteher* in German) three times in Chapter 13.

① 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you.

The leaders of the church at that time were men and taught the Word of God with knowledge and understanding in various situations. Hebrew Chapter 5 records as below

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

The verse above refers to the leaders (*Vorsteher*) who were given power to distinguish things and guided concrete church lives. They were called elders and supervisors.

② **13:17 Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority.**

Leaders were literal examples who lived before God.

1 Timothy records as below—

4:12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

And 1 Peter records as below—

5:3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

It means that the saints had to submit to leaders. Hebrews Chapter 11 shows us faithful examples who lived by faith. Some of the leaders of the early churches walked by faith like fathers of faith. The author of the Epistle greets such leaders.

③ **13:24 Greet all your leaders and all the Lord's people.**

We learn a brother-sister relationship between the leaders and the saints. The author teaches us how to keep a relationship by sending greeting. Therefore, leaders are key people, because those who are taught and grow are influenced by leaders. The author encourages another important thing.

3) **Imitate the Faith of Leaders.**

The author taught, "**Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.**" (13:7)

He taught them to see not only their life as the leader but also the outcome of their way of life.

My friends. The leaders who teach the Word of God correctly are very important person.

Paul taught to imitate leaders as below—

1 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

We can't say like Paul, "I urge you to imitate me." On the contrary, we say, "Please don't imitate me."

However, Paul told them as below—

11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Paul definitely said to them, "Follow my example," But I don't think that Paul was a perfect example. He failed, fought, had quarrels and disputed. However, he faithfully came to God with his human weakness. He said, "As I follow the example of Christ." We see the attitude of the leaders (*Vorbilder in German*) here.

As the Word commands us, we should imitate the leaders who risk their lives, teach and live in the Word. They are the leaders who the Bible teaches to submit. However, human beings are imperfect after all. There is only one perfect leader ⇒ Jesus Christ

2. Jesus Christ is the True Leader.

13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

1) **The Nature of God the Creator**

This world is always changing. It seems to be progressing, however it is not true. Philosophy, science and theology are changing with the times. Sense of value in this world is changing.

We human beings must die no matter how long we may live. Even the great leaders must die. Therefore, we need to inherit faith and leaders. However, the Bible teaches us that **"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."** How happy we should be that He is the true leader.

Exodus records a conversation between Moses, the leader of Israelites, and God as below—

Exodus 3:13 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

3:14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Hebrew uses a different tense than English and German. The Japanese translation for "I AM WHO I AM." is translated in present tense. However, in Hebrew, it is possible to translate in past and future tense, too.

It means that God is present beyond tense. He was present in the past, He is present now and He will be present in the future. How helpful He is!

13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

2) Jesus Christ Who is the High Priest

It may be difficult for human beings to complete lives of faith. However, Jesus Christ, our High Priest never changes. He who lives forever helps us and gives His power and comforts and encourages us.

Paul records as below—

Ephesians 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 holy 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.

As we have already studied, Jesus Christ is the High Priest, in the order of Melchizedek." What was Melchizedek like?

Hebrews 7:1 This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him,

7:2 and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means "King of righteousness;" then also, "King of Salem "means "King of peace."

7:3 Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.

The author of the Epistle records about Jesus Christ as below—

Hebrews 7:17 For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

7:24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.

7:25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

My friends. We don't need to fear if He is with us. If He stays with us, we will feel confident.

Let's live and walk in our Christian lives with His help.

Therefore, we need to understand Jesus Christ more and more. The more we understand Jesus Christ, the more powerful our Christian lives should be.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "Christ Never Changes"

—In the Past, in the Present and in the Future—

We studied a very important thing today.

13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

How should we live in light of this truth?

13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

1. We need leaders who teach the Word of God correctly
2. We should remember our leaders.
3. We should imitate the faith of leaders.

God Bless You!