

August 5, 2018

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: “Don’t Be Deceived” (1)

– Not to Fall into Temptations –

Text: James 1:12~15

1:12 Blessed are those who persevere under trial, because when they have stood the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

1:13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

1:14 but each of you is tempted when you are dragged away by your own evil desire and enticed.

1:15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Introduction

There are good people and bad people in this society. When you hear the title of today’s sermon, “Don’t Be Deceived” what does it remind you of?

Yes, we can think of a type of swindle (called Ore Ore Sagi in Japanese) in which someone impersonates one of your relatives. There have been thousands of victims who were cheated even though warnings have been widely issued.

Surprisingly, the National Police Agency reported that the total financial damage was 14,550,000,000 Japanese Yen from January to May in 2018, which is about 29% increase from the precious fiscal year. How regrettable!

Some of you might remember your own painful experiences in which you were deceived. It is very sad that those who deceive people have existed in every age.

Let’s consider today’s text in this sermon entitled, “Don’t Be Deceived”.

Now, we want to consider again the background in which this epistle was written.

James, the author of the epistle, is said to have been a brother of Jesus. He lived with Jesus since he was a child and had various experiences with Jesus. As we read the epistle, we gradually understand what he had experienced. The epistle records many things about the daily lives and practical teachings of those days. It would be impossible to record those things if he were not in such circumstances.

This epistle was written in approximately A.D. 60. It is also said that it was written at

an earlier time among the books of the New Testament and that not much time had passed since the early church had started. The church seems to have had two serious problems at this time.

① **The church began to be persecuted and was suffering trials.**

As I mentioned last time, persecution came from the outside. Around this time, Christianity was suppressed and Christians were caught one after another and killed. Some people who were going through trials came to have doubts about the Lord and their own faith in Him, and they started to lose courage.

② **People began to fall away from the faith.**

The other problem the church faced was **temptation**.

Those who became Christians faced much temptation and some soon gave way to it. In the end, they left the church and gave up the faith.

My friends, the early church was filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit and it made great advances. At the same time, however, it is true that some people lost their faith. This was the new problem that the church faced. Therefore, James probably thought that he should write to the church about temptation as well as trials.

Trials and temptation were just like the two sides of a coin or like brothers who have different characteristics. Sometimes, we don't clearly understand that our problem is a trial or a temptation. The Scripture encourages us as below —

1:16 Don't be deceived my dear brothers and sisters.

What does James teach us about this significant theme? Let's study the following two points today.

Main Points

1. The Promise to Those Who Persevere under Trials

1:12 Blessed are those who persevere under trial, because when they have stood the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

The author wrote about trials that come from outside in Chapter 1, Verses 2~11.

Now he records **rewards** to those who persevere under trials. They are two blessings: One is the blessing that they will experience in lives of this world and the other is one that will be given after their death.

① The blessing that they will experience in this world refers to the blessing that they have in their inner lives.

The verse above records, "Blessed are those who persevere under trial." Blessed means **the blessed situation in God**. As an inevitable consequence, those who are in this position have inner peace.

The inner peace is not shaken by one's external environment, because it is the peace (the blessing) that is given through trust in God.

Jesus gave us the following important teaching:

Matthew 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5:5 “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

These blessings are taught as the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount (the Beatitudes).

The other blessing is prepared to those who persevere through their trials.

② The blessing is the crown of life that is given after death.

The crown is different from the one that Jesus the King wears. It is the crown that is given to those who overcome hardship. The book of Revelation says this about the crown of life.

Revelation 2:10 Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.

James records that the crown of life is given to those who persevere under trials as well as who were faithful, even to the point of death.

1:12 Blessed are those who persevere under trial, because when they have stood the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

We will receive **the crown of life** that God has promised us. We persevere in our trials because we love Christ, and, as a result, we are given inner peace (blessing) in our lives in this world. On top of that, the crown of life is assured for us after death. How blessed we are! It is God's grace. Let's focus on the hope we have in the future and live in faith with perseverance every day.

James mentions **temptation** as the other significant theme.

2. We Should Know the Source of Temptation.

1) Everybody Is Tempted.

1:13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

Everybody is tempted. Most victims of a remittance swindle thought that there was nothing to worry about. Many people who received medical treatment for heatstroke were confident in their physical strength so they thought they were all right in the terrible heat. Yes, indeed. The problem is that they believed they are fine and that things were fine, which is what we all tend to do, including me. We should know that

he who tempts us is stronger than we.

Some people think if they become Christians, they will be fine. Some people think that if their faith grows and they mature in Christ, they will be fine even if they are tempted. Other people think that their faith is small, and that is why they are tempted.

However, James says, “**When tempted, ...**” Everybody is tempted no matter how long they have believed in Jesus or how far they have grown in their faith. As our faith grows and matures, we are tempted in our own way. Jesus was also tempted by the devil three times in the wilderness at the beginning of His public life. He defeated the devil and won a victory.

Jesus was always being tempted in His life. It continued until the very moment of His crucifixion. Yes, He was tempted even on the cross. What did one of the criminals who hung there cry out to Jesus?

Luke 23:39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

Jesus was tempted until the very end.

My friends, I, who am very small, am also tempted. For example, if somebody says to me, “Your sermon was really great!”, I feel good. When I continually hear their compliments, I become gradually haughty. Appropriate words of thanks help others improve, but an extravagant word of thanks may lead them into temptation.

This is a very famous story about Rev. Charles Spurgeon, who was a well-known English biblical scholar and preacher.

When Spurgeon finished a sermon, a woman approached him and said to him, “Pastor, I was greatly moved by your amazing sermon!” He replied to her, “Satan has said the same thing you did.”

In such ways, we are continually exposed to temptation. We should have a clear consciousness that we are always being attacked by Satan when we lead Christian lives.

2) God Doesn’t Tempt Anyone.

1:13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

The word **peirasmos** (in Greek) that is translated as a “trial” and a “temptation” has two meanings.

① Attack from outside ⇒ Trials

② Attack from inside ⇒ Temptations

James focuses on problem number ②, that is a temptation.

We should first remember that God is not the source of temptations, because God’s

nature cannot accept temptations. He has never tempted anyone. He has nothing to do with evil or experiences evil. Therefore, God never tempts human beings.

However, God sometimes allows a man to tempt a certain person.

Consider the Old Testament saint Job, who was blameless and upright. He feared God. However, God allowed Job to be tempted and to have severe trials.

When we study Job's life, we are able to learn how to overcome temptations. We will study it at another time when the opportunity arises.

My friends, when we overcome temptations, our faith will absolutely grow and become stronger. It is a very important and a helpful experience. But, if we give way to the temptation, what should we do?

⇒ We should quickly deal with the aftermath of failing to resist.

We should consider the cause of our failure and repent before the Lord. He will gladly offer a helping hand.

3) **The Problem Is Inside Us.**

1:14 but each of you is tempted when you are dragged away by your own evil desire and enticed.

Generally, temptation undergoes the process below;

- 1 We have **desires** inside ourselves. (Desires themselves are not the problem.)
- 2 **The temptation** tries to deceive us into following our desires.

Human beings tend to be tempted by desires, like a fish that is deceived and caught by a lure. Therefore, we should always be spiritually awake and watch our that we do not become like a fish.

This verse also teaches that we should not let our desires grow into greed.

③ At the very moment that we give in to temptation, desire has conceived and it gives birth to sin.

1:15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

The verse above pictures temptation that leads to sin as birth, “**after desire has conceived.**” Sin quickly grows, so we must quickly deal with the aftermath of sin.

④ When sin is full-grown, it gives birth to death.

The desire is the mother of **sin** and also the grandmother of **death**. Like this, human beings bear the burden of desire, sin and death by nature. Physical death is merely the process by which we enter the eternal Kingdom of heaven for people who were forgiven.

My friends, we should deal with the aftermath of sin before God, who has the authority to forgive our sin. We should quickly confess our sin and repent of it before Jesus Christ. His blood shed on the cross perfectly cleanses our sin and makes us clean before God.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

As we have seen, the desires grow into greed and give birth to sin and finally they give birth to death. It takes place inside us. Therefore, we need to understand where the source of the temptations is in order to overcome temptation.

We are often deceived by temptation. Therefore, we should always watch carefully. James gave a warning **not to be deceived** to the saints of the early church. This warning is also addressed to us who live Christian lives today.

How about our Christian lives? We are tempted, aren't we?

Let's honestly admit our weakness and sin, and draw close to the Lord.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "Don't Be Deceived" (1)

— Not to Fall into Temptation —

Today, we studied very important things. As we live our Christian lives, we always experience temptations and trials.

The author of the epistle teaches the following points and also gives us a warning.

1. Those who persevere under trials receive the crown of life.
2. Understand the source of the temptations.
 - 1) Everybody is tempted.
 - 2) God never tempts human beings.
 - 3) The problem is inside us.

* God Bless You!