

April 21, 2019

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (Easter Worship)

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "The Lord of Resurrection Gives You Hope"

—Having the faith of 3 % up—

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:3-10

15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

15:4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

15:5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

15:6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

15:7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,

15:8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

15:9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Introduction

Happy Easter, every one!

We would like to celebrate "the Resurrection Day" of Jesus Christ and give thanks to God. People celebrate His Resurrection simultaneously all over the world. He is the One who defeated death and has risen from the dead. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the Savior (the Messiah) of human beings.

By the way, we have various wishes in our mind.

Many people want to change themselves or to be changed, but it is not easy to do. If they can change by themselves easily, they don't need to have any conflicts.

As you know the consumption tax was raised 3 % since April. The government appeals that it needs for people's future in Japan. I would like to encourage you to have "the faith of 3 % up". Raising the consumption tax may be a natural way to go. But what would you say about faith in God? Some says that his faith is no different than the one in the past. However, faith should develop and grow, not being stagnant. {Keeping the present faith also means a setback in faith.}

My friends, let's have "the faith of 3 % up" from the Easter in 2014. If your faith grows up, your life becomes more blessing by faith. It means that you will be made more powerful instruments like people who are more faithful and better than you and who are respectable. You are changed into more "blessing one".

Paul writes as below,

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am,

My friends, Paul was changed and he said, "**I am what I am,**" And he said it was "**by the grace of God**". What man was he changed like? The secret of the answer for it is hidden in today's text. We would like to study in *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Chapter 15, which is called the chapter of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are going to study the following 2 points.

Main Subjects

1 . Paul before he met Jesus Christ

Acts 9:1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest

9:2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

9:3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

9:4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

9:5 "Who are you, Lord?" Paul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

Paul who had persecuted Jesus was greatly changed in his life after he met Him. His life had begun since he met Jesus who had resurrected.

Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

As he stood before God who knew everything, he was faithful before God.

It is Paul before he became Christian.

2. Paul after he met Jesus Christ

1) The fact and a witness of Resurrection

15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

15:4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

Paul teaches three facts here.

① Jesus died for our sins.

② Jesus was buried.

③ Jesus was raised on the third day.

It is said the core part of Paul's confession on his faith.

Paul writes further as below,

15:5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

15:6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

15:7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,

Paul writes five groups of witness for proving the facts.

① Cephas (Peter in Hebrew)

② Twelve disciples

③ more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters

④ James

⑤all the apostles

My friends, as we read the Bible we come to realize that the important point is the very fact that there were people who had witnessed Jesus' crucifixion, burial and resurrection, rather than His teaching or many miracles. This is the good news (the Gospel).

The heart of message of Christians of the early church was

⇒ the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Paul persecuted the church violently. But he suddenly was changed into an evangelist. The adversary was changed into a supporter. What is the reason for his sudden change?

The only one reason was

⇒ the fact that he had met Jesus the Resurrection.

The Resurrection of Christ made James who was a brother of Jesus and other people believe, who hadn't believe Him yet. And also Paul said that most of witnesses were still alive.

{It is said that *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* was written after 25 years of Christ's death.}

Paul writes further.

2) Paul's sincere confession

15:8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

"One abnormally born" (Ektroma in Greek, There is no good translation in Japanese.) What image do we have from this term? It doesn't mean a baby born premature, but it means "a fetus of physical defect, of deformity": a baby spiritually died in Hebrew viewpoint. Therefore, it is useless and worthless.

Paul said himself **"one abnormally born"**, who was a secretly aborted child, who had no hope. When he met Jesus the Resurrection and was caught with strong light, he realized how worthless he was.

Furthermore, he understood the fact that people in Corinth who were materially satisfied were leading life as if they were like the emperors. Then, he told who he was and his existence.

15:9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

He said,

①He was the least of the apostles. ②He did not deserve to be called an apostle. because

③"I persecuted the church of God."

He caught Christians and persecuted and was standing beside Stephen who was killed with stones. Knowing the fact he said as below,

15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not

God's grace changed Paul amazingly. Like this, if we believe in Jesus Christ and his Resurrection ⇒ we are changed.

Then, what should we do to be changed? What we should do is to accept our existence honestly before God. What was our life before we met God the Creator? Are we standing before God leading lives every day? Paul has lighted with the light of the Lord of Resurrection, so he realized clearly his existence. ⇒ I am sinful existence.

Jesus' death on the cross and His Resurrection had done for us who are sinful beings. Jesus paid our debts of sin and redeemed us. We should simply trust in Him. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are saved only we believed in Him. How thankful we are.

Then, how are we changed? I tell you how people are changed by showing the following three points.

3) Joy and peace are given.

①The quiet time (devotion and prayer time) is changed into joyful and peaceful time. It is time to praise, give thanks, repent and give prayers for others. It is time to come close to God and know His richness and abundance.

②God's word gives us joy and peace. The word of God is God's sword which is working today and gives us encouragement and power to live. The word of God guides us the right way not to stray.

③Faithfulness(obedience) to the Lord changes to joy and peace. He who received God's blessings eventually walks faithfully and has no pain or stress but rather is given thanks with joy.

Paul writes,

15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Paul said that he worked much harder than other apostles like Peter and John. He didn't boast it but said "but the grace of God". Therefore, he gave all glory to God.

"The grace" is given to people in a unilateral way who are not to deserve. If it is given to people who deserve it is not "grace", but "reward". "The grace" is given to us without any reasons, and it is "the grace".

Paul had caught Christians and persecuted them. He couldn't complain to God even if he was struck and killed. However, God changed Paul.

⇒ It was nothing but "the grace" of God.

God is the One of abounding in grace.

Exodus 34:6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,

34:7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.

My dear friends, one message (the good news) is running through the Bible.

⇒ God is the One who gives abounding grace from generation to generation.

Do we believe in God of the Bible? What image do we have about God the Father?

One day Jesus told a parable.

Matthew 25:14-29

25:20 The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'

25:24 "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.

25:25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you'

Each servant had different image about their master, who received 5 talents and did 1 talent.

But why?

Your "feelings" in your mind deliver "thoughts" and result in "action". Paul believed the

Resurrection of Jesus and then he experienced love of God the Father. And his life was changed greatly. That Paul said as below ;

15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am,

What do you think about today's message? Jesus who came to meet Paul does step in our lives. We are walking toward the kingdom in heaven with hope in our lives. How about life like this?

Let's pray for "the faith of 3 % up" taking advantage of Easter in 2019.

He who trusts in Jesus Christ is blessing, because he is changed into imperishable body like Jesus who has resurrected.

1 Corinthians 15:51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed

15:52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "The Lord of Resurrection Gives You Hope"

—Having the faith of 3 % up—

We celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ today. Paul believed in His Resurrection, so his life was greatly changed as if he became a different person. If we believe in Jesus we are also changed, because God of Paul and our God is the same One. Faith of our inward self receives God's abundant grace and is made more powerful.

We are allowed to come close to God and receive His grace from generation to generation. It means that our faith grows and Paul said it "the grace of God".

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

* God bless you!