

May 5, 2019

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Where Does Wisdom Come From?"

—Does It Come from Heaven or Earth?—

Text: James 3:13~16

3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

3:14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

3:15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

3:16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

Introduction

Last month, the base of a call center scam group was exposed in the beach resort town of Pattaya, Bangkok. 15 Japanese have been arrested for illegal employment. They, the actual working unit, were fully equipped with a large number of telephones (approximately 50 IP phones), 20 personal computers and a manual of fraud. Japanese swindlers repeatedly committed fraud from Thailand.

Their hiding place seemed a palatial residence with a pool. The total financial damage was larger than two hundred million and several tens of millions of Japanese Yen. It is said that they were working just before they were arrested.

A warning against the "It's me" swindle has been repeatedly given. Nevertheless, the victims are many. The reason is that their methods were very skillful. They were cunning men. It was the first time that the actual working unit was found in a foreign country. According to an expert, the "It's me" swindle was firstly committed in Japan and spread over to Taiwan, China, and other countries. People who are cunning are increasing more and more. It is regrettable and shameful.

My friends, with regard to wisdom, there are various kinds of wisdom in general: the wisdom to help people and the cunning wisdom to make people unhappy. Originally, wisdom should be used to help people.

James records about the wisdom as below—

3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Then how could wisdom work in the opposite way?

James deals with the problem of our tongue (word) in Chapter 3. However, he suddenly begins to address the subject of **wisdom**. Why did he do it? The reason is that we need wisdom to control the tongue (our words). There are many people who have knowledge but live without wisdom. In fact, those who commit a “Hey-its-me” scam are very cunning. On top of that, they work very shrewdly so we can hardly find it is a fraud. This is our times (our society).

James records a question in Verse 13, **“Who is wise and understanding among you?”**

Now, first of all, let’s check our wisdom by ourselves.

Main Points

1 . The Christian Church in the Days of James

Churches in the days of James (AD 60s) were developing without the persecution of the Roman Empire. When society is quiet and peaceful, and its economy is stable and prosperous, Christian churches also tend to be **worldly and material**.

Human beings seek material prosperity more and more than to seek God’s spiritual prosperity. That fearful yeast was overgrown in the churches. Therefore, the spiritual Christianity that Paul taught was alienated and even became the object of their hatred. James taught the principles of faith to Christian churches that became like that.

3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

James asked them, who were boasting that Christian churches were greatly developing, if they were really wise and understanding.

The term **wisdom** (**wise** in the New Japanese Bible) does not mean having a lot of knowledge but the something that is acquired through all the experiences in life.

If there is such a man he encourages him as below—

3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

The verse above says that he should become humble and do **good deeds** to people around him.

Deeds refers to the attitude of human relations in daily life.

There is nothing more difficult than human relations in our daily lives. There are many people who can not work because of human relations.

1) **Christian Churches in Those Days**

James records that there were three characteristics (evidence) in Christian churches in those days as below —

- ① **Bitter Envy** : To do not acknowledge others' success and happiness so to show them severe attitude.
- ② **Hostility** : To have selfish ambition and stir up division and try to achieve one's own purpose with a vicious attitude. The cause of hostility is hidden in one's mind because he/she acts according to what is hidden within.
- ③ **To Boast**: It means to boast against the truth. The truth refers to the Gospel. He who accepts the Gospel of Jesus Christ boasts only the cross. However, he who does not accept the Gospel boasts in himself.

3:14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

Needless to say, as James records **"If you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts"** you are not faithful to the truth. The most fearful word is **hostility** (selfishness), and it means to form a **party**. Japan is a democratic country, however, what it really is that politicians who are able to collect money get more members of the group and win by weight of numbers. Therefore, a party and a section are formed.

Christian churches in the days of James approximately 2000 years ago had such problems that should not have been expected in God's churches. However, it really happened. James continues developing his teaching in the next section.

2) **The Wisdom that Comes from the Devil**

3:15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

Wisdom like this doesn't come from heaven. It belongs to this world (cosmos) and the devil. Unspiritual (flesh) means **corrupted human nature**.

The Scripture says as below—

1 Corinthians 2:14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come

from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

Human beings by nature do not understand God and God's Spirit. Therefore, **this world, the flesh,** and **evil spirits** should have been problems for Christians who did not accept God yet .

The following verse clearly teaches that what things such wisdom brings.

3:16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

My friends! As we understand, the fundamental cause of false wisdom is the untamed tongue. The word from the tongue bares envy, selfish ambition, disorder, and evil deeds.

James records:

3:8 but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

We should understand that if we fail to tame our tongues, it results in fearful confusion and destruction.

Then, what should we do if we are not able to tame our tongues? We need to ask God for His true wisdom (the wisdom from heaven). If we do not have God's help, we never gain a victory over the problem of the tongue.

Now, let's think about the wisdom of God.

2 . The True Wisdom from God

1) Wisdom is in the Mind.

First of all, what is **the wisdom** that is *sophia* in Greek? According to the Japanese dictionary, its definition is **the ability to understand the reasons for things and deal with them properly.** We are able to solve things by wisdom. It is also the ability to decide our actions.

When James uses the word **wisdom**, it means **the wisdom of heaven** not the wisdom of human nature. Wisdom is like the principle that reigns our mind. Things in our minds control us humans and affect our way of thinking and life. In this respect, **the wisdom** that the Bible means is the principle that controls our mind. It is not the problem of knowledge but mind.

James encourages as below —

1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

The verse above teaches that we should ask God for His wisdom, who often fail and cause

trouble by the tongue (our words). What the great encouragement it is.

Those who have true wisdom do not boast and assert themselves excessively. The wisdom doesn't refer to the accumulation of knowledge. **Wisdom** is revealed by **the gentle and kind deeds**.

The wisdom that the Bible teaches is not only the wisdom that merely solves problems or the ability to take action and make a decision, but it also refers to the ability of discerning things.

However, we also have the problem of **the flesh**. The wisdom from flesh is **false wisdom**. The flesh that the Bible means is our uncleansed human nature.

2) The Nature of the Flesh

What is **the flesh**? We can explain it in various ways. I will point out the following two things.

- ① To put it simply, the nature of the flesh is to put ourselves first, that is selfishness. It is **the flesh**. Everyone loves him or herself. When we are ignored, we are offended. We make excuses to protect ourselves. We sometimes do not apologize even if we make a mistake. We can easily become sullen by a small thing. We feel pitiful. These examples happen to the best of us, and they are natural things.
- ② Another nature of **the flesh** is to worry what others think of us. It is not so important what others do. It is important how we are changed by God.

We come to church to worship God. However, if we cling to the flesh, we aren't easily changed by God. If there are envy, selfish ambition, and conflict in a family, various communities, groups, they cannot keep order. They must solve the problem sometimes.

How do we react to our nature of the flesh? It is painful for us to find ourselves in our minds. We want to avoid it if it is possible. Then, we react in various ways, for example,

- ① Some people persuade themselves that everyone has the nature of the flesh (envy, conflict) so it is no problem and is practical about everything.
- ③ Some people realize, "Yes, it is my flesh!" and pray to change their nature, however, they can't find a solution and finally give up.
- ③ As for the other people, when they saw themselves by the light, they are broken and ask God for His help and are getting cleansed by looking up the blood of Jesus on the cross. Paul belongs to these people.

The Bible teaches that such flesh should be changed. God exposes our selfishness under the light and gives a solution. It is difficult for us to enjoy the grace that God gives until we have the

solution for our flesh.

Paul looked at himself and cried as below—

Romans 7:24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me this body that subject to death?

God flashed at Paul by His light. His blessed life has started since then.

3) Peacemakers

We are given the solution when we realize our problem of the flesh and immediately come to God to ask Him for help. God responds to us by His work, and we begin to grow before God and to start walking a purified life.

James records the problem of the tongue (word) by closing the following Verse.

3:18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

The tongue (our words) can't be tamed by the flesh. The natures of the flesh are envy, conflict, division, and selfish ambition. We need wisdom from heaven (God's wisdom). **Peacemakers** are such people.

My friends. The seed that **peacemakers sow** are not the seed of the flesh, but the seed sown in peace. Peace is Jesus Christ Himself. We are able to sow the seed of peace and become peacemakers in Jesus.

Conclusion

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Today we studied the importance to receive the wisdom from heaven. We who have the flesh are not able to get a victory over the flesh by ourselves. However, God made us overcome the world in Jesus Christ.

The Bible: 1 John 5:5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

And God makes us **peacemakers**.

Let's pray to God for His help to be the saints who sow the seed of peace, not the seed of the flesh.

3:18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

* God bless you !