

September 29th, 2019

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Testimony: "We Should Use Our Wealth Correctly"

—The Limitation of Wealth—

James 5:1~6

5:1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you.

5:2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes.

5:3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.

5:4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

5:5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.

5:6 You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

Introduction

Every day when we open a newspaper, we see problems of money. There are money troubles in politics and administrations. Bribery caused by money problems occur in companies and communities.

Money problems occurred in the educational field recently: A certain young boy passed an examination of a famous private university's medical school by paying money. In Korea, our neighbor country, a big monetary problem occurred when a daughter of a member (one of the candidates in the presidential election) of National Assembly entered a leading private university through a connection.

It is true that money has great power. We need money to live. However, we should be careful of money, because it makes our heart lose feeling and become corrupt. On the contrary, it is true that money really does precious work to help people.

The problem is how to use money. What does the Bible teach about money? This is a big topic.

There was a problem of money about 2,000 years ago. There was a very big gap between the rich and the poor in those days.

I have heard a following story.

A certain man visited that famous pastor John Wesley and asked, “Who is the rich according to the Bible?” He answered, “He is called the rich if he has anything more than he who is satisfied only with food, clothing and shelter.”

I say that probably there is no one among us here who has no food, clothing and shelter. As for me, I am rich in that kind of meaning.

James said in the beginning of Chapter 5 as below —

5:1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you.

James says, “You rich people.”

My friends, what do you think about the rich and how do you apply Scripture to yourself? Some of us think that we are not rich, so we have nothing to do with it. We tend to think that we are not as rich as other people.

“Rich” is a relative word. It usually has comparative meaning. Therefore, it is difficult where we draw the line between the rich and the poor. However, according to Rev. Wesley, **those who are not rich** are rather few.

Those who were **rich** were extremely rich about 2000 years ago and they were very few. Other people were absolutely poor. They were incredibly **poor** comparing with our standard. The few rich people were oppressive to a large majority of the poor. We find this in many countries today. Japan was also one of such countries in the past.

Let’s think about ourselves and study the following three points.

Main Points

1 . Limitation of the Rich

5:1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you.

Scripture above depicts the rich severely, because their life is limited even though they were rich at that time. Even if one is rich (it is thankful though) as it is, it is limited.

It is often said that infinitation represents three ends as below.

① **The End of Life**

We all come to the end of life. We have to face the end of life. We should never forget that we finally finish the life on earth.

② **The End of This World**

The Bible teaches that there is an end of this world. We will study about it in the next opportunity. The Lord Jesus comes to this world again and then this world comes to the end. We tend to forget it, but the Bible clearly teaches it. We must keep it in our heart. We don't know when it will occur, but the Bible clearly says that it will absolutely occur.

③ **The End of Prosperity**

Japan has prosperous years, perhaps more than we have ever experienced, and we also lead rich lives. However, we should not expect that our rich lives will continue forever. The end of prosperous life is approaching step by step.

James said, **"...because of the misery that is coming on you."**

Scripture teaches that there is possibility like that.

2. Limitation of Wealth

5:2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes.

5:3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.

Man is never satisfied and feels relieved even though he heaps up wealth, rather the more he has, the more he becomes greedy. Besides, he craves wealth endlessly.

It records that wealth has rotted, moths have eaten clothes and gold and silver are corroded. It is a figurative expression. We should remember that **wealth** is limited, that many people hold it so that his life is guaranteed.

3. Wealth Only for Oneself

5:4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

5:5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.

1) Incorrect Way of Using Wealth

A case of unpaid wages is rare now in Japan. However, a capitalist has squeezed from workers before the war. I've heard that illegal residents work for low wages now.

Like this, the rich of the Jewish society in those days would have not paid wages to the day labors.

The Bible record the word to forbid doing such a thing.

Leviticus 19:13 "Do not defraud or rob our neighbor."

Deuteronomy 24:14 Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns.

James records as below—

5:5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.

The rich live in luxury and self-indulgence. They are just like livestock that are fed and when they become very fat they are taken to a slaughterhouse.

Today, hundreds of millions of people are starving in this world. On the other hand, we waste food. We should keep in mind what James warns here.

Therefore, the third warning is the one that he becomes rich only for his benefits. It is a big problem.

2) Healthy Use of Wealth

Rev. John Wesley gives three advices about **wealth**.

- Earn all you can
- Save all you can
- Give all you can

We think the first two advices are surprising according to the Methodist Church of that time, that taught a sober and plain life. However, the important advice is the third one. It teaches the reasons why they made and save money: they should make and save money for other people and God, not for themselves.

My friends, please don't misunderstand. The Bible doesn't teach that the rich, becoming rich

and money itself is evil or sin. The point is what we think about money and what our purpose are when we use money.

Rev. Wesley records about wealth: if he becomes rich and when he dies, how he deals with his wealth as below.

If my son correctly understands wealth and knows the correct way to use it, I will leave him my fortune. However, if he leads a life of materialism or he has no faith or his life is money-centered and spends money only for himself even if he has faith, I just leave him the minimum standard of living and I give all of the rest to other people.”

How about us? If we have a lot of money, how do we deal out money to our children?

Everything belongs to God. My property is allowed by God through His grace. Therefore, we should not use only for ourselves, our prosperity, our desire and our family. On the contrary, it is important that we should first offer it to God and try to use for other people, even just a little. The important thing is that we should not compare with other people. We need to live with things that God allows to have. We should lead life with such attitude.

God never makes people starve, those who put God first. He always gives everything necessary to those who follow Him. We would like to find joy and live in such circumstances. We need to walk with the Lord constantly without going with the current of the times.

{Illustration}

January 13, 2005, JOY FM, American Christian radio station, campaigned for funds of 75,000 dollars for building a house of hope.

The house of hope was a project to build houses for people in India, who lost houses by Tsunami at that time. In India in those days, they could build a house with at least 1000 dollars.

The monetary goal of the radio station was to gather money for 75 houses. Surprisingly, 750,000 dollars were donated during the campaign. It was ten times the monetary goal. The total amount was reported later. A certain listener called and said, “We planned to build houses, however, God planned to build a city. Halleluiah!”

When the world and society become peaceful and prosperous, people become more interested in lives on earth. It is the same as our days. A splendid apartment is built one after another in Kitahama area like the days of James. People don't pay any attention to the coming destruction but devoted all their energies to pile up a fortune.

In those days, some believers became interested in storing up a fortune like worldly people more than teachings of Jesus Christ. James was deeply worried about it, so he gave the warning to the rich people.

Jerusalem was surrounded by the Roman army and completely destroyed in AD 70, six years after James wrote the epistle. Everything and anything including luxurious mansions of the rich were destroyed in a night and the city collapsed. People were killed like livestock in a slaughterhouse. People who survived completely lost houses, fortune and property.

The Bible (the Old Testament) became only hope of Christians who survived at that time. They must have desperately remembered the Word of Christ Jesus when Jerusalem collapsed.

Matthew 6:19 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The epistle of James speaks to us like this still now.

Conclusion

Title of the Testimony: "We Should Use Our Wealth Correctly"

—The Limitation of Wealth—

Today we listened to an important message that is still valid for today.

We studied how to use the wealth that God gives. It is given through His grace. How do we deal with the gift?

I remember the words of Rev. John Wesley.

- Earn all you can
- Save all you can
- Give all you can

Let's read the following Scripture and close the message.

6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy,

and where thieves do not break in and steal.

6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

* God bless you !