

November 10, 2019

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Testimony: "Simply Say 'Yes' or 'No'"

—For Not to Be Judged—

Text: James5:12

5:12 Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned.

Introduction

The Epistle of James has been thought that it was not concerned so much in terms of faith, because it does not say much about **eternal life, forgiveness of sin, the cross and resurrection** and so on. Yes, indeed, but it doesn't mean that the epistle is not so important for Christians.

When we guess the social conditions of the days when James wrote the epistle, we come to think that the epistle is a very precious one. As the days of James are like our days, we are able to apply it to our lives. Therefore, what James said here is very necessary for our daily lives.

James records in today's text, **"Above all, do not swear."** It is difficult for us, the Gentiles, to understand its real meaning because it is written according to the Hebrew background at that time.

For example, the president or the prime minister in Christian countries swear on the Bible at the ordination ceremony. A bride and a groom always say **wedding vows** at Christian wedding ceremonies in Japan now. My friends, if we literally accept the message of James, it might seem like it contradicts other parts of the Bible.

What do you think about today's Scripture? What does it mean? Do we really disobey the teaching of the Bible? No, we really don't. Then, how should we accept today's Scripture?

Let's study the following two points today.

Main Points

1. Do Not Swear An Oath.

1) The Real Meaning of This Phrase

First of all, we need to interpret the meaning from the context. Jewish people in the old days swore in the name of faith under the law. Swearing was their faith itself, their testimony of faith and it really was their lives in faith.

Jesus said to the Jewish people as below—

Matthew Mt 5:33 Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, “Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.”

5:34 But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne;

5:35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.

5:36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

5:37 All you need to say is simply, ‘Yes, or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Now, we should remember three attitudes of swearing based on the verses above. The number three means completeness in Jewish society, so these three oaths cover all things.

- ① To swear an oath by Heaven means to do by saying God’s name.
- ② To swear an oath by the earth means to do by something that is sacred on the earth.
- ③ To swear an oath by others means to do by some other sacred things.

However, the Jewish people in those days lightly took oaths.

A man is imperfect, so he often fails to keep his oaths. Nevertheless, the Jewish people in those days carelessly swore many oaths. Jesus taught they should not swear on anything. James also taught that they should not swear carelessly. We should remember it.

My friends, we also swear various oaths. Generally speaking, those who don’t know the true God don’t think that swearing is a very serious deed. However, those who understand God and Jesus Christ know it a profoundly serious thing. We should not too easily make oaths.

God is the One who created the heavens and the earth. He is Almighty, righteous and perfect in love. Therefore, he who knows the Holy One loves Him and is not able to swear an oath thoughtlessly.

The important thing is that we should not carelessly think and violate God’s name. As you know,

if someone swears an oath by pointing at something, it shows that their words are unreliable. (If he is reliable, he doesn't need to swear.)

Of all things, they should swear an oath only before the One who is holy (God the Creator). However, Jewish people had spoken the words thoughtlessly. They had sworn by somethings that are not God, by the earth and other ordinary things. Jewish people were God's chosen people and were loved by God. They were given the law so that they could follow God.

However, they had strayed from God's will. God taught His chosen people how to live (attitudes) through James. He taught them not to take oaths.

Then, why did he teach us not to swear?

2) The Reason That We Should Not Swear.

The Bible gives reasons why they should not swear.

5:12 Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.

James said if they simply say “Yes” or “No” **“You will be not be condemned.”** We should be remembering here that we will be judged before God after we finished lives on the earth. Man will be judged according to what he has done on the earth.

The Bible teaches as below—

The Old Testament, **the Book of Ecclesiastes Chapter 12,**

12:14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is Good or evil.

The New Testament, **2 Corinthians Chapter 5,**

5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Therefore, the Bible teaches about God's judgment throughout its entirety.

Everyone who will stand before God is judged and held responsible for his words and deeds.

God judges evil and injustice things by His justice. And His judgment is fearful one. As God is righteous, He cannot overlook evilness, injustice and sin.

However, Jesus stands beside the throne of judgment and He testifies on behalf of those who

believe in Him have been already forgiven by His holy blood.

How blessed we are! It is the privilege in Christ that is given to us, who received salvation.

It was not given according to our deeds. Christians are given such privilege by only faith. Therefore, we praise His name.

My friends, please don't misunderstand. It doesn't mean that Jesus makes a defense at the judgment seat, so we are all right even if we make a mistake. On the contrary, it teaches an important way to live (attitudes) for those who believe in God.

God teaches us that we should not carelessly swear things that we can't keep by ourselves. On the contrary, it teaches us the correct way of life.

To swear on the Bible at the president's ordination ceremony and the wedding ceremony means to swear a solemn oath and know the responsibility to fulfill it.

When he swears the oath by knowing that he can't fulfill it, he swears the false oath before God. Therefore, he is asked to live a correct life before God, and if he lives like this, he is blessed by God.

Then, what should we do?

2 . What Should We Intend to Do in Our Lives?

5:12 Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.

1) To Be Honest Before God

We, who believe in God, should take an attitude that we simply say “Yes” or “No.” It is what we Christians are asked. It means that we only say “Yes” or “No” when we need to answer.

If his word is trustworthy, he doesn't need to swear the oath hastily. Prohibition against swearing presupposes that the day of the Lord is near. Moreover, it is written in the imperative form.

If we understand that the Lord will judge every word we speak, we won't easily swear an oath. To swear by God's name reveals his equivocal attitude. He displays his ignorance just like the Gentiles who don't know God in a true sense.

If we come to think so, we realize that the wedding vow at the Christian wedding ceremony is very important. Because, a man should be responsible for his word (the word of the oath).

The Bible records as below—

Galatians 6:7 Do not deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

It is very important that we should carefully lead an honest life before God. However, it is impossible for us to try to live so. Let's make up our mind to be honest and simple hearted.

2) A Practical Life of A Saint

Then, how can we lead life like that?

① To know God, to experience God

We need to pray and be in God's word. It means that we should establish life of a daily devotion. If we want to really understand our friends and a spouse, we need to take time.

Like this, we need time to know God and we come to understand what God is like through fellowship. We really understand God through our experience.

② We need to lead a life to rejoice in God and give thanks to Him.

When we come to know what God, who is alive, has done for us, we are filled with joy and thanks.

Conclusion

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—For not to Be Judged—

We studied the important thing today.

5:12 Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes "or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned.

Then, how can we lead a life where we simply say **"Yes "**or **"No"?**

Today, we studied the following three points as below—

- 1 . To be honest before God
- 2 . To pray and study God's word
- 3 . To rejoice in God and give thanks to Him

* God bless you!

