

March 1, 2020

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "The Exiles in the Diaspora"

—The Chosen People—

Text: 1Peter1:1~12

1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,

1:2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1:4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,

1:5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

1:6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

1:7 These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

1:9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1:10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,

1:11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them

was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Introduction

We would like to start studying 1 Peter today. Peter was a great saint who lived fearlessly in faith in the days of the Early Church. At that time, the believers in Jesus Christ were severely persecuted.

Let's listen to God's voice and worship Him through Peter's epistle.

Personally speaking, I like Peter very much, because he was a hasty person and often made mistakes and he liked to be the center of attention. He had a strong will but also had **weaknesses** such as when he denied the Lord. However, as the Lord said, he was changed. He was the saint who was changed 100%. We have hope by seeing his attitude in faith.

A while ago, a woman came to meet me. She became emotional and severely criticized a certain person. I was listening quietly to what she said. Finally, she grew excited and said assuredly, "Such a person will never change, even if 100 years pass." It may be right from the human viewpoint.

I was overwhelmed by her strong words and I could speak nothing. Can we label other people like that? I felt a kind of fear about her attitude.

I believe that people can change. Yes, they are changed. When we open the Bible, we find many people who were greatly changed, including Peter. We often see people who are changed by Jesus Christ even today.

My dear friends, what was Peter like? It was Peter who wrote and sent the epistle.

Let's study the following two points from Peter.

Main Points

1 . Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ

1) The Historical Backdrop

In 64 AD, a great fire occurred in Rome in the days of Emperor Nero. After that, Emperor Nero severely persecuted Christians, blaming them. The epistle seems to be written by Peter just

before the great persecution.

The persecution against Christians in Rome greatly shocked the early Christians who were scattered all over the Roman provinces in those days, and they sensed imminent danger at the same time.

James (Jesus' biological brother), who became a head of the Church of Jerusalem, was killed by the high priests so the security in Judea was disturbed very much. The Anti-Roma campaign was growing, and rebellions were prevailing in the days of Emperor Nero (AD54~68).

Peter wrote that those who were given the salvation of Christ would live days with hope of resurrection even though they lived in an unstable society of rebellions and persecution. Therefore, the epistle deals with the practical things.

Let's think about Paul who wrote the epistle.

2) Peter, the Author of the Epistle

Peter's former name was Simon. Jesus called Simon Cephas (It refers to a rock in Aram.).

John 1:41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).

1:42 And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

In those days, Greek was a popular language, and Cephas referred to Peter in Greek. Therefore, Peter became a popular name. Peter was Jesus' first disciple. Jesus gave the name "rock" to Peter, but He didn't give anything to Peter's brother Andrew. Jesus appointed James and his brother John and gave them the name Boanerges, which means "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:13~19)

On top of that, we understand from reading the Bible that Jesus was especially concerned about Peter, James and John. (Matthew 17:1, 26:37) Peter was most outspoken amongst them. It was natural that he was chosen first and Peter was the first to respond to Jesus' calling.

However, Peter was **weak** like us. The Bible records as below, that was the time of the last supper before Jesus' crucifixion.

John 13:36 Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."

13:37 Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

13:38 Then Jesus answered, “Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!”

Jesus continues,

Matthew 26:31 Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’

Mt 26:33 Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”

Peter said,

Luke 22:33 But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”

However, the following thing happened next day as the Bible records.

Matthew 26:69 Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said.

26:70 But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you are talking about, “he said.

26:71 Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

26:72 He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!”

26:73 After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

26:74 Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!” Immediately a rooster crowed.

Peter denied Jesus three times. However, he changed after Jesus was crucified, was buried and resurrected. On top of that, when the Holy Spirit came down on the disciples at Pentecost, they changed completely. Peter also became quite a new man. He was changed by God.

Peter began to preach at the Temple in Jerusalem and when the people heard him, they were cut to the heart and led to repent. (Acts 2:37,38) The leaders of the society of the days arrested Peter and John and put them on trial before Sanhedrin.

Peter said to them,

Acts 4:11 Jesus is

“The stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.”

4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.”

Like this, Peter confessed Jesus was Messiah and became the leader of the Early Church. It was God’s work. Therefore, when we understand that Peter wrote the epistle, we are able to read it zealously.

2. The Exiles in the Diaspora

The receivers of Peter’s epistle are recorded in Verses 1,2 as below—

1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,

1:2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

We see **three characteristics** of the Jewish Christians at that time as below.

1) The Chosen People

One of the characteristics of Hebrew culture seems that the emphasized point often comes in the beginning. For example, when Jesus spoke many parables, He first said, **“The kingdom of heaven is like this,”** and began teaching about **the kingdom of heaven.**

Their epistles are written in the same styles. Paul called the receivers **“people who were called”** and **“the saints”**. However, Peter called them **“the chosen people”**.

Jesus said in John Chapter 15,

15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

We, who believe in Jesus the Lord, all are **the chosen people**. We didn’t choose to be, we were chosen by the Lord. We were not worthy to be chosen. It is only because of the grace of the Lord.

2) The Exiles

Let’s focus on the point that Peter called the receivers of the epistle scattered **exiles**.

The exiles refer to people who don't live in their own countries but live in the foreign countries.

I lived in Germany for 12 years at the age of 22~35 years. I married my wife in Germany. She also lived in Germany for 9 years. God gave us three sons in Germany. Therefore, we think Germany is like our homeland.

However, Germany was not **my country** yet. When I went to extend my visa, I quickly realized that I was a stranger. Those who have no German nationality must receive a residence permission whether they are students or whether they are workers. We were not citizens but had only temporary residency.

Our predecessor in faith including Abraham lived admitting that **they were foreigners and strangers on earth.**

Hebrews 11:13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.

Peter began writing the epistle to the saints scattered throughout the provinces of **Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia** (the western half of Turkey today) so that they realized the fact of being exiles.

3) The Diaspora

Let's focus the word diaspora (to scatter). This term refers to the people scattered throughout foreign countries. Approximately in BC 6, Jewish people lost their country and scattered throughout the Middle and Near East.

They left Judea that was God's promised land and scattered throughout the provinces. They were called the Jews in the Diaspora. Paul, an apostle, was one of the Diaspora.

Peter also used the word for the Jewish people who believed in Jesus Christ.

Approximately, in the middle of 1st century, the Jewish people were scattered and lived throughout the regions surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. **The exiles scattered** implies to the situation of Christians.

First of all, they have their hometown to return.

They were the exiles at that time; however, they had a hometown in heaven where they would return. When we lived in Germany, the foreign country, we knew that we would return some day.

We Christians have a hometown to return to. It is not on earth, but it is in heaven that we cannot see yet. It is the eternal world that is free from every sin, evil and trouble. That is that our hometown in heaven and we live as the exiles looking up at our hometown.

There is another reason.

We have a mission to fulfill on the earth even though we need to have pain and patience.

There are many people around us who don't know God the Creator. We scatter among them and work, have relationships with them, study and live.

The Jewish Christians at that time **were scattered and lived as exiles**.

Sometimes they realized their situation that they were not accepted, however, they realized that they should be patient and to preach God's love and truth. That was their mission.

It is Christians who are scattered and live as exiles nowadays. We are travelers.

We are the amazing travelers, those who are Christians.

Conclusion

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—The Chosen People—

Let's conclude today's message.

Peter, who was the leader of the twelve disciples, experienced weakness and mistakes. He denied the Lord, saying, "I don't know that man." He realized how weak he was.

In spite of the fact, yes even because of his weakness and mistakes, he became the leader of the church like a cephias (rock). He learned that he should never trust in his nature power or things. He could write the epistle because he learned to trust in the Lord.

We are also like him. The Lord works on us and makes us grow. Let's experience the Lord's strength that works in our weakness, not by our own strength. Peter was an ordinary weak person; however, he was changed by the Lord.

What we learned today:

1. We have a hope to be changed.
2. We are **the chosen people** and **the exiles in the Diaspora**.

We have a place to return to that is the hometown in heaven.

It is true that we have troubles in our lives on the earth. We have battles and pain in this world. We have trials everyday living among people who don't know God.

However, the Lord understands our labor. He makes us grow by using trials.

We are called and chosen to fulfill God's will on the earth. The Lord comes close to us. We testify about the Lord and preach God's love by looking up at our hometown in heaven.

We find there the privilege of the saints that is made for us by the son of God. Let's walk on the earth by looking up at our hometown in heaven even though we experience battles and pain now.

God bless you!