

March 15, 2020

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Yasuhiro Hirose

Title of the Message: "Bethel, the God's House"

—Nearer, My God, to Thee—

Text: Genesis 28:10~22

28:10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran.

28:11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.

28:12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

28:13 There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.

28:14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

28:15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

28:16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it."

28:17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

28:18 Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

28:19 He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

28:20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear

28:21 so that I return safely to my father's household, then the LORD will be my God

28:22 this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.

Introduction

Good morning, my friends.

I would like to speak a message entitled "Bethel, the God's House" today.

Many of you know the hymn 393 "Never, My God, to Thee" was performed on the deck of the Titanic that was sinking after striking an iceberg.

I also hear that the hymn is often sang at the funeral.

The hymn was a favorite song of William McKinley who was the 25th president of the United States. Mt. McKinley was named after William McKinley, that is the highest mountain (6190.4m) in North America.

When President McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist at Buffalo, New York, he was said that he was feebly singing the hymn 393. When the funeral was performed in Canton his hometown, Ohio, all trains and trams stopped and almost of organizations closed for 5 minutes. The hymn was sung at all churches in America.

The word of the hymn was quoted from Genesis 28:11, "Bethel, the God's House". It is a famous story of Jacob who passed the night at the place called Bethel.

Today I would like to speak my relationship with God according to Bethel, the God's House by the following two points.

Main Points

1. My Experience of Bethel

My Bethel was

Tezukayama-kopo, 26-14-1 Tezukayama, Abenoku, Osaka 545-0037

It is my Bethel, the place that I met God.

I believed in God when I was 18-year-old, however, I left church at the age of 22. After 15 years, God who is merciful gave me an opportunity to return to church. He made me to have a desire to have a new house for my family.

In those day, my wife and I lived with my parents' house. They had a Buddhist altar and worshiped. I visited many show homes more than 100 houses and I realized I could not afford to buy own house.

I have exhausted every possible means, I finally prayed to God, "My God, please give me a good house." It was a selfish prayer. However, God answered me. I found a 27 years old condominium that was 100m far from my parents' house.

We decided to buy it and then we came to know that the building was planned to rebuild in three months later according to an equal exchange system. We were able to have a new building free of charge. On top of that, we were asked to lend my room for a consultation room for another customers. I gained a large profit from a small amount of capital.

As I experience these thigs, I wanted to read the Bible again. I began to read Genesis 1:1. At that time I experienced Bethel like Jacob.

What is the story of Bethel that the Bible records?

Jacob who deceitfully took the birthright of his brother Esau. Knowing Esau's murderous anger, Rebekah, his mother, told Jacob to ran away from his house and directed to Paddan Aram. At that time, he was 70s and was in the depths of despair.

⇒ Jacob arrived a certain place. He lay down to sleep and he dreamed a dream. He saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

⇒Jacob heard **the real God's voice** for the first time in his life.

⇒ Jacob received three promises from God.

①the promise of land ② the promise of offspring ③ the promise of all people on earth including the gentiles

⇒ These were the birthright that Jacobs clung to.

Jacob received these three promises from God Himself.

On top of that, he received the greatest promise from God as below–

Genesis 28:15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

⇒The light suddenly shined into his desperate future.

⇒Jacob was filled with fear (a sense of awe) and confessed his ignorance and lack of knowledge about God.

⇒Jacob worshipped God early the next morning.

① Jacob named the place Bethel that he met God. (Bethel : God's house in Hebrew)

② Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. (He put it for his purification and offering himself.)

Jacob had prayed to God since his childhood, however at that time he experienced that God in his knowledge became the living God and his fear to God became joy to God.

It was Jacob's experience at Bethel.

Now I would like to speak my experience at Bethel.

I began to read the Bible again and I came to Genesis 12:1 in a few days.

Genesis 12:1 The Lord had said to Abraham, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

Immediately fear and joy ran like a high-tension current or an electric chair on my back. It was not in the dream like Jacob but through the Scripture. I experienced God's presence. I really gave thanks to God, "This condominium is Bethel, the God's house!"

Then I began to read the Bible fervently. In a few months I was led **to repent** and in a year, I **returned to church**.

Then, my condominium finally finished after 2 years. However, I have been transferred to Hiroshima Prefecture. The land God showed was not the condominium but the land of Hiroshima that was far from 370km from my new house.

In those days, the word of Genesis 28:15 came into my mind.

Genesis 28:15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.創

I went to Hiroshima by holding the Scripture and a one-way ticket.

During three years in Hiroshima, I had the great God's blessing such as various training through my work, my mother's baptism and records of high profit in Hiroshima branch. It was **my experience of Bethel**.

2) What the Lord Taught Me

If I define **Bethel**, it is the place to meet God and the place my soul return. We often hear and see **power spots** in the society. They think that they are places to get spiritual power and energy, however they are not come from God's Spirit. Bethel is the real power spot.

What does Bethel mean for me? What does mean experiences at Bethel for me? I think that those who met God dramatically and have the experience like Jacob are really blessed. Such people should share testimonies and we are very encouraged.

They are amazing blessings, however, experiences of **Bethel** in daily lives are also important things for us.

1) I have two Bethel that God prepared for me.

1. One of two Bethel is the church and Sunday worship.

The church is my spiritual oasis in busy daily lives, in the society under the principle of competition and in the cold and heartless society that emphasizes increasing the productivity and efficiency.

The church is the place that we can have the spiritual fellowship (We call them brothers and sisters in the church.) together.

We can experience a friendly feeling, warmth, a feeling of belonging to the same church, peace and joy at church. I think that the church is the place that we listen to God's welcome voice.

Even though I visited other churches during a trip or at the place I transferred, I experienced many times that I had joy to pray together in the name of Jesus Christ and understood each other.

Sunday worship at Kitahama International Bible Church is my Bethel, the God's house.

I am given two blessings at Sunday worship.

① One of them is to praise songs before the presence of the Holy Spirit. Our praising team choose praising songs that are appropriate for that day's theme and Scripture in prayer and they lead the congregation. When my heart is pulled up to God, my heart and body are filled with the inexpressible sense of freedom. Even if I can't devote singing songs, I try to listen to praising of my brothers and sisters, then my stiff heart gradually become relaxed.

I was often encouraged and given power by my favorite hymns and praising songs. Sometimes, the melodies and words of songs strike a chord in my heart and tears well up in my eyes.

When I put my trouble, problems and anxiety aside, or give up them, I only look up God and sing songs, I am given encouragement and power from heaven.

Duo Takase is the music director of KIBC, who had a trial and hovered between life and death these years. We are given the privilege to praise the Lord with the first rank musicians and listen to their praising and playing music. It is the privilege of KIBC.

② I would like to share another blessing of listening to the message.

I was taken to before God through the Scripture. Sometimes I was given encouragement, sometimes I was examined my heart and sometimes I was told to repent.

I was urged through the God's word as below—

“Where are you?” Genesis 3:9 ⇒ God is always looking for me.

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:21 ⇒ God searched my heart.

“You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” John 13:7

⇒ God told me, “Trust in Me, before you grumble, “Why, why God!”

At home, I look back Sunday worship by reading that day's program and the outline of the message, I am moved with the message again. It is a very thankful time

We are really blessed to listen to the message of Pastor Kuroda, who is a leading messenger of Japan. I heard the message of Pastor Kuroda 24 years ago for the first time. Being thirsty for the powerful God's word, I was very impressed with his message at that time. Since then, my soul has been fed by his message for 24 years. How happy I am!

Nakannoshima, Osaka is a place full of memories for me. I was born spiritually and raised here. I handed flyers of the special evangelic gathering around Nakanoshima. When I walk around the area, I remember God's grace that He brought back me to this place, who once left the church.

Kitahama International Bible Church is my Bethel, indeed.

God must be very glad to see us who come to church to worship Him by offering **heart, time** and **transportation**. We are allowed to see God here

2.The other Bethel is the daily devotion.

Studying the word of the Bible and praying at home is a daily worship that is Bethel, the God's

house.

God speaks to us when we study the Bible and pray. When we become quiet and call, "God the Father in heaven," our heart is filled with joy. When we face hardship, we unconsciously look up heaven. It means that our souls are seeking God.

I read Clay, a devotion book, every morning. I underline and write down what I was impressed and taught and read it again on a commuter train and at my office. I sometimes deeply impressed.

The Old Testament records that an animal that ruminates is clean. It is blessing for us to ruminate what we learned through the Bible.

Then, I begin to pray according to KIBC weekly prayer request. I mainly pray for 1st and 2nd prayer request on week day and when I have time like on Saturday I pray requests 1~3. I have prayed for 20 years like this.

These are very good things, but I came to realize an important thing. I thought that it was enough to pray for the prayer request, however, I was taught that I didn't have **a living conversation** with God. My devotion was only studying by Clay and praying for the prayer request. It became a mere daily routine.

The Bible teaches that God is pleased with us who are faithful, even if what we do is poor thing. I think it important thing, but at the same time God wants to have fellowship with us.

God said to me that He has already fellowship with me. On weekends, I 'm trying to make it a habit to do a walking prayer around a pond in my neighborhood. I walk for 5km and sometimes 10 km a day. First, I begin to walk by remembering God's grace and then I begin to pray for many subjects. This is also my Bethel.

I was given the unspeakable feeling that I belonged to Him. I was satisfied and was freed by God's word and His hand in prayer. As a result, I studied many things and got many responses of prayer.

Sometimes, I just give thanks and look up God without prayer. Peaceful and relieved feeling, God's presence are extraordinary experiences for me.

I was taught that I needed to have an attitude that I should listen to His voice and wait to Him to speak. This is fellowship with God and the devotion time.

Daily devotion time is the true fellowship with God and the place of the living conversation.

That is Bethel.

My motive power of restoration in faith was to read through the Bible. The Bible that full of underline, dates and notes is my treasure. I want to try again to read through the new version, the Bible 2017.

I also pray according to ACTS method of prayer as below. It is the basic way to pray.

A : Adoration

C : Confession

T : Thanksgiving

S : Supplication

I want to have fellowship with God and listen to His voice in prayer remembering ACTS.

Conclusion

I studied the following two points through “Bethel, the God’s House”.

1) My Experience of Bethel

Jacob met the living God at Bethel, the God’s house, in the depths of despair.

God works in our real life. I experienced that He reveals Himself to me who is a small thing.

2) What the Lord Taught Me

1. Kitahama International Bible Church and Sunday worship are my Bethel.
2. The daily devotion is my Bethel.

God prepared me “Hirose’s Bethel” and was waiting for me.

Thank you very much.