

March 22, 2020

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (Open Church Worship)

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "How Can We Clear the Hurdles in Our Lives?"

— The Large Stone —

Text: Mark 16:1~ 8

16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.

16:2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb

16:3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

16:4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.

16:5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

16:6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.

16:7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

16:8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Introduction

The 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games are just around the corner. The problem of COVID-19 is a big issue, but a focus of public attention is that selection of representative players of Japan is well under way. Forty-six events will be held this time. The entire world pays attention to how many medals each country gets, Japan included.

One of the highlights of Olympic Games is the marathon race. The population of marathon runners in Japan is said to be approximately 9,640,000 people (including joggers). If they want to be part of the three who become Japanese representative runners and join the Olympic Games, they must practice harder than other people. Suguru Osako set a Japanese record this time and got an entry ticket to the Olympic Games.

Osako had a training camp for two and a half months in Kenya (East Africa) for the

Olympic Games. He went through hard training every day in the highlands (approximately 2400m) with other long-distance runners in Africa. Osako said, "I just concentrated on running faster than anyone. Therefore, when I ran as much as I wanted and could do high-quality training, I was able to have confidence from that." I think that his hard training led to setting the Japanese record.

When we think about marathon runners, their way to achieve results must be not easy. The representative players in Japan are those who overcame the high hurdles. They must have high abilities and are talented. But how did they clear the hurdles?

The following two characteristics can be said of them:

- ① They had a **strong conviction**. They were not outsiders.
- ② Each of them gave all of his/her effort. They seemed to completely fulfil his/her potential.

They who are chosen to be the representative players in Japan are expected to show the fruit of their efforts.

By the way, we all don't always make the Olympic team. Even if we don't, each of us has some hurdles in our lives. The Bible records people who cleared the high hurdles. We study from Mark 16 today. The Bible records three women who loved Jesus in this chapter.

In the early morning, the Sabbath was over, and the sun had risen. Jesus was crucified and was buried. The three women went to the tomb to anoint (custom in those days) Jesus' body.

When they came to the tomb, the large stone had been rolled away and so they investigated the tomb. The Bible records that the stone was very big. It was impossible for women to roll it away. At the very moment, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe.

The young man said,

16:6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.

My friends, what was their reaction to his word?

16:8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

A miracle occurred! Jesus Christ has risen. It is Easter that celebrate Jesus' resurrection. Easter on this year's calendar is April 12.

I will talk about Easter later. The big problem for the three women was how to roll the stone away.

The Bible records as below—

16:3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

It is recorded when the women came to the tomb, the stone had been rolled away. It was a

miracle.

What can we learn from the story? Let's study the following two points today.

Main Points

1. What was the biggest hurdle for them?

16:3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

1) The Large Stone

The women asked each other, "How can we move the large stone?"

First, it was physically impossible to move it away. In those days, the tomb was in a cave in Palestine. It is said that the entrance was covered with a large stone so that it was moved by three adults with great difficulty.

On top of that, the Roman soldiers were watching over the tomb and they also put a seal on the stone. It was impossible to enter the tomb.

Matthew 27:64 "so give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

Therefore, the women already knew of the difficult situation (They couldn't roll away the stone with human power), but they went to the tomb anyways. They probably could not handle the situation calmly. They loved Jesus and only wanted to anoint His body.

However, when they came to the tomb, the large stone had been rolled away.

16:4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.

2) Our Large Stone

What is our **large stone**? It may be a trial, pain or a physical handicap. Each of you may have different ones.

We think how we can roll the large stone away. We work hard to do what we can. Nevertheless, we sometimes cannot find the way out no matter how much of an effort we make.

My friends, the Bible teaches the way how we roll the large stone away and get over it.

2. The Secret to Clear Our Hurdle

1) Love for Jesus

The women didn't decide to go to the tomb only if the large stone was removed or if some men would come and help them. In fact, the Jesus' disciples scattered and ran away after Jesus' crucifixion. They were quite helpless as a human being.

Nevertheless, three women went to the tomb.

⇒ It probably was **the love of Jesus (to anoint His body)**.

Let's think about Mary, Jesus' mother. She must have unfailing love for Jesus. She was with Jesus. Her mother's love never faded.

It is written about Mary Magdalene as below—

16:9 When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he driven seven demons.

It is written that she had seven demons driven out of her. How she has suffered with them. Her experience has been beyond imagination.

The common trait of these women was their **love for Jesus**. It was because of **their love for Jesus** that they went to the tomb even though their situations were different. They didn't act after they planned. They took immediate action because they only wanted to anoint Jesus' body.

When they came to the tomb, the large stone had been rolled away.

The Bible teaches us the important thing as below—

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

It is the living God who worked there. It is the secret that God will give a solution to the problem. We cannot see faith, but we should believe it.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Love toward Jesus drove three women to go. They probably had received a lot of love from Jesus. Specifically, Mary Magdalene was made free from control of seven demons. God responded to her pure love.

2) God's Response to Their Love for Jesus

He who moved away the large stone was an angel.

16:6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.

Now let's consider another point. The women **bought spices** so that they might **go to anoint** Jesus' body. It must be a fearless act in human viewpoint. It was impossible to anoint Jesus' body. However, they were driven to it by **love for Jesus**.

Buying spices mean that the women did what they could. We learn here that doing what we can is very important.

God responded to their **love for Jesus** like this. God the Creator is the One who responds to us.

{Illustration}

A short time ago, when I had a devotion time in the morning a certain pastor shared his testimony. He told me the following story.

“I am the type who cannot sleep until I decide something on my mind. I probably take after my father in nature. On top of that, when I get nervous before things like an examination, my stomach hurts. In this, I probably take after my mother in nature. However, I don’t think they are not always bad things. When I look back my life, my anxiety became a driving force.

A certain Saturday evening, I went to bed without finishing preparation for a Sunday message. I dreamt a dream that night. Professors at my seminary and my senior pastors were waiting to listen to my sermon in the dream. The content of my sermon was thoughtless, and I spoke on the spur of the moment. At that very moment I came out of the dream in a cold sweat. I jumped to my feet and prepared for the sermon until morning.

He continued, “I want to think that my worry may be caused by my strong sense of responsibility. No, I don’t think so. In fact, my worry is caused by my tendency to depend on my strength. I didn’t trust in God. **I was taught that the important thing was to trust in God’s Word, not trust in my strength.**”

My dear friends, the American minister said that the way to overcome the hurdle of worry, the large stone, is to trust in God’s Word, not trust in our own strength. That applies to me too.

The women who went to Jesus’ tomb overcame **the large stone** (the hurdle) like this.

What do you think today’s message? We have various hurdles in our lives. How do we overcome them?

Conclusion

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Today we listened to a few important points. Our hearts are easily troubled. However, we are taught the secret to overcome the hurdles in our lives. → It is that we should trust in God’s Word (the Bible).

The Bible: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me.”

John 14:1

* God bless you!