

August 23, 2020

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Living as God's Sojourners"

—The Source of Power—

Text: 1 Peter 2:11~12

2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

2:12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Introduction

{Illustration}

Archeology is a science that studies ancient things through uncovering remains and documents. There are lots of archeological remains in Israel, so it is called a treasure house of remains. The towns of B.C. 1000 and 2000 remain under the present city of Israel, because of what is called a 'stone culture'.

Jericho, one of the oldest cities in the world, was excavated and there was found the ruins of the castle walls from B.C. 8000. The archeologists worked hard, and they finally found them. The most interesting thing is that many towns, villages, castles, temples, houses and synagogues that appear in the Bible were excavated one after another.

The credibility of the Bible rests on the credibility of archeology. Many people, places and things mentioned in the Bible have been supported by recent archaeological finds. God let archeology advance remarkably in the 21st century.

Another example is discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is said that there are several thousand remains in Israel that are not excavated yet.

The remains of the Jerusalem Temple of the days of Jesus are excavated one after another. They remain untouched in Israel because of the stone culture.

The Bible records,

2:6 For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

God who is present in history tells us. Last time, we listened to the sermon entitled *Living as God's People*. We studied from the Scripture how we, as God's people, are blessed. Once we did not live as God's people, but now we live as God's people. We are blessed by God in so many ways.

Peter continues teaching about **God's people**. Today, he teaches about a relationship with the people around us. It means that how we live in society and in families as **God's people**.

Recently, it is a big theme how to live in the days of the coronavirus pandemic that are uncertain. People are seeking a certain way, a safe way, and a peaceful way. Christians who believe in God are the same. The New Testament is a book that was written approximately 2000 years ago. However, it is a blessed book because it speaks to us and teaches us because the Bible is the book of God.

By the way, the Scripture today from 1 Peter is a fundamental teaching. He records **what a Christian is like** and **advice to Christians**.

Main Points

1 . **What a Christian is Like.**

2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

1) **Those Who Are Loved by God**

Peter called them, **Beloved**. Who were his beloved ones? They were receivers of the epistle. They were Jewish Christians who dispersed around Asia Minor (Turkey now). They were Peter's fellow people who believed in Jesus as the Messiah. They were the saints who lived in vast Asia Minor.

As for Peter, "**Beloved**" meant those who are loved by God. They were the saints who were chosen by God and given His grace. They were loved by the Creator who made the heavens and the earth. God's love is His nature.

When our things go well, we usually think that **we are loved by God**. However, when we have hardships, when the way is closed, when we have an accident and when we have a sorrowful experience, we doubt that **we are loved by God**.

We think that God might have abandoned us. Even on such an occasion, the Bible teaches that **we are loved by God**.

This year's rainy season was unusually long. Heavy rain clouds hung over and the humidity was

unusually high. The maximum humidity of my room reached 94%. However, the sun was shining over the rain clouds. It is quite obvious when we fly in an airplane and look the sky through the plain window. Even if the rain cloud is very thick, the sun is shining over it. Like this, God's love never changes.

Jesus said,

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

Let read the book of Isaiah, Chapter 49 again.

Isaiah 49:15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?"

Christians who believe in God and are loved by God are God's children who are never separated from God. Therefore, we are never forsaken. It is one of the Christians blessing.

Peter teaches another blessing of Christians.

2) Christians Are Sojourners and Exiles

Peter records in the beginning of the epistle as below—

1Peter1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

1:17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile,

On top of that, he records as below—

2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

{Illustration}

As I mentioned you before, I used to live in Germany for 12 years, from 22 years old to 35 years old. I married in Germany and my wife lived there for 9 years. God gave us three children and they grew up in Germany. Therefore, Germany that we lived for a long time seems like our homeland.

Even though it seems so, it is not my real homeland. I really realized that I was still a sojourner when I extended my own visa. Those who have no German citizenship must apply a residence permit whether it was a student visa or whether it was a working visa, because they are sojourners.

The Scripture teaches that life in this world and our present lives are just like a short journey. It is like to stay abroad and it does not mean to stay for ages. Therefore, we should not live like a permanent resident.

Peter taught the following two things, how we should live as sojourners.

2. Some Advice for Christians

1) Abstain from the Passions of the Flesh.

2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

My friends, you may think that **the passions of the flesh** refer to appetite, a desire for possessions, a sexual desire and so on. Originally, a desire itself is not bad one. God gives human beings them as His blessing. We should not think that God wants us to live an ascetic life. On the contrary, desires that God gives are His blessing.

When we want to eat something, if we have no appetite, we cannot taste anything. We cannot enjoy reading books if we have no desire for reading. We cannot play sports if we have no desire for playing sports.

Therefore, our appetite, the desire for reading, the desire for playing sports, sexual desire and so on that God gives us are good things by themselves. However, **the passions of the flesh** are different from them. They are passions to act against God, to reject Him and to live a selfish life.

The Bible teaches us to **abstain from the passions of the flesh**. Then, why should we **abstain from the passions of the flesh**? The reason is that they **wage war against your soul** and take away our spiritual blessings that God gives us such as peace and true satisfaction.

We who are rich in materials and live in an advanced nation are exposed to a lot of information that stimulate **the passions of the flesh**. What do you think about them? A man cannot stop buying a car and a laptop when the new models are released. A woman may be stimulated **the passions of the flesh** by fashion magazines.

How about us? Have you ever examined what desires we are easily attracted to? When we put energy into pursuing **the passions of the flesh**, our relationship with God becomes weak. Even if we come to church, we cannot have the profound satisfaction and peace that are given through fellowship with God. We become Christians who are spiritually poor, and our souls

become thin and weak.

Therefore, we should search our hearts and confess what **passions of the flesh** we are trapped in before God and ask for His forgiveness. The holy blood that Jesus shed on the cross cleanses our transgressions. We find the way to get the genuine satisfaction and inner peace if we do so.

Peter advised another important point.

2) Keep Living among the Gentiles.

2:12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

The word 'Gentiles' refer to the people who are not Christians. In that sense, Japan is a country of Gentiles. Even in China, a communist country, there are a hundred million Christians (only of underground churches) among 1.4 billion people. There are approximately fifty million Christians in China at the lowest estimate. In Korea, it seems that there are one in every four or five Christians. In North Korea, it is found that there are many Christians who attend underground churches.

In Japan, there may be one in every 100 or 200 Christians. People around us are probably not interested in Christianity.

Like this, the receivers of the epistle were living in a Greek culture. They could hardly understand Christianity. Christians were criticized because that they did not worship Greek gods or attend Greek traditional festivals. On top of that, Christians who did not join in Emperor Worship were criticized that they did not assimilate into Roman society.

In those days, Suetonius (AD 70-140) a historian, records in his book, *The Life of Nero*, that Christianity was a suspicious superstition. Some people spread a bad reputation that Christians secretly ate human flesh. Probably this was because they drank wine during Communion.

It was not easy to deny the rumor when it had once spread. It was what is now called, 'fake news.' Therefore, they needed to live an appropriate life as a servant of God.

Peter encouraged the saints in Greek.

2:12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

The Scripture "**Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable**" encourages us. I did not have power to live honorably. However, I became a different being. **Once** I was not a people, but

now I am God's people. Now I know where **the source of power** is, so I really give thanks to God.

James records as below—

James 5:13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.

When we are in trouble, we should pray. When we are happy, let us praise God.

James realized where **the source of power** was.

How about today's message. Let pray to God so that we can keep our conduct among the Gentiles honorable. We should clearly know where **the source of power** is.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "Living as Sojourners"

—The Source of Power—

We live a life in this world **as sojourners**. We are travelers that have a destinations (goal). Yes, it is the Kingdom of Heaven. We are travelers who are walking toward the Jerusalem in heaven. We are loved by God as His chosen people who walk toward the goal. We need power during our journey. The source of power is in God, not in me.

Let us read the Scripture that James advises.

James 5:13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.

* God bless you!