

August 30, 2020

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

The Title of the Message: "Switch on, Let Us Be in the New Daily Life!"

—The Two Habits—

Text: Matthew 10:16

10:16 "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

Introduction

{Illustration}

The pandemic outbreak of Covid-19 has seriously affected so many people. As of July 18th, the number of the infected has reached 14,000,000 and over 25,000 people have died. In various parts of Japan, clusters of infections have occurred, and many people were infected and died.

What did coronavirus bring to us? Peoples' lives are in danger and doctors and nurses and medical workers became exhausted. A small virus greatly changed our social structure. The Tokyo Olympics was postponed. Above all, it led to an economic crisis with high unemployment and bankruptcies. It confronts us with a grave situation. It affected the educational world, too.

One of big problems is that the future is uncertain. The unpredictable society! This is the reality where many people in Japan have problems and tasks and they do not know how to live. They say corona-related depression, corona-related stress, corona-related bankruptcy, corona-related evacuation, corona-related divorce, and so on.

The corona-related crisis is not yet over, and it will continue. The future situation of society is uncertain.

Then how should we live?

The Bible teaches as below—

10:16 "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

When Jesus sent His beloved disciples He said, **"I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves."** He taught them that they would be hated, had hardships, and were persecuted.

Therefore, He taught them to **be wise as serpents and innocent as doves**. Jesus taught how to live in a hard society. That happened approximately 2000 years ago. However, that will not change a lot. There are many wolves in this generation, aren't there?

When we, who believe in Jesus, realize that we are **sheep** of God, we should also remember that there are wolves as well.

How should we live?

God teaches us an important way to live from today's text.

Let us study the following three points.

Main Points

1 . Living to Be Wise as Serpents

Jesus said, "**be wise as serpents and innocent as doves**."

He firstly teaches to live as serpents that are wise. What does it mean? It means to live like serpents **by raising awareness**.

{Illustration}

By the way, I have heard the following story.

In the old days, a wise king sent four princes to an orchard of mangoes to teach them an important lesson. He firstly sent the oldest prince to the orchard.

He sent the second prince in spring, the third prince in summer and the youngest prince in autumn. When the king the youngest prince came back, he asked them what they had seen.

The first prince said that the trees withered.

The second prince said that the trees had the thick foliage.

The third prince flowers were in full bloom.

The fourth prince said that the trees bore fruit.

When the king listened what they reported, the king said, "Everything you observed are undeniable facts. You saw different things because the seasons are different."

My friends. You already understand. The story teaches a lesson that each person has his way of looking at the things. It means that each person may explain the same thing in various ways.

We understand the differences if we raise awareness, not just see, and hear. The lesson teaches the real meaning of **raising awareness**.

Now, Jesus taught to **be wise as serpents** to live uncertain days. The Bible records about the serpent that appears first in the Bible as below—

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was craftier than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”

A serpent is a cunning creature. Why did Jesus use the example the serpent that led human beings to vice? ⇒ The reason that Jesus said was that the place He sent the disciples was that dangerous.

Then, how can we live **wisely as the serpent**?

It is to live a life by **arising awareness** in the real sense.

{Illustration} How to Win Any Argument by Robert Meyer

The author writes that the following attitudes are important in this book.

① **Focusing on a sign**

Attitude and voice show a person's sign. One of clues to detect how a person receives our word is with the appearance of his attitude.

When he sits across from and confronts another person directly, it shows his self-confidence, but we should refrain as it in the coronavirus pandemic now. When he sits diagonally opposite, it shows that he opens his heart. When he folds his arms across his chest, it shows his wariness. We can get information about someone by reading these signs.

② **Reading the message**

It is said that there is a **hidden meaning** behind words. We need to distinguish his true feelings and his official stance. If we accept words at face value, it may get us into real trouble.

③ **Focusing on what he regards as important**

There are cases where other people think it important even though we do not think it so important. When we explore this by making the most of our eyes and ears what a matter of critical importance for someone else is, we can build a friendly conversation.

④ **A principle of behaviors under the influence**

There is a concept that man is greatly influenced and controlled by the environment he was raised in. We should it keep in mind when we judge people. We can avoid a self-righteous way of thinking and looking at from a biased viewpoint if we keep the principle of behaviors under the influence.

* My dear friends. Living **to be wise as serpents** is to live by **paying attention** like this, because the serpent said as below—

3:1 He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”

2. Living to Be Innocent as Doves

Jesus said, **“Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”**

Doves have various habits, for example, the habit of flying a long distance by homing instinct. The exact reason why the dove has such a habit is not clear. There are theories of a sun compass, of a magnetic force, of an eyesight, etc.

Doves have the habit to make a nest that its three sides are surrounded such as a corner of an apartment house and of a shrine.

Their habit to make the nest is according to three conditions

① There are no enemies around it. ② They can get food. ③ They can drink water.

Doves live together in groups. They live together in several dozen and several hundred. They do not live alone but in a flock. Doves live by depending each other like children.

Jesus said, **“Be innocent as doves.”** I think that being innocent refers to dependent nature of doves, rather than its innocent nature. Innocent dependence is found in children, not in adults.

One day, Jesus told about children as below—

Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

18:2 And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them

18:3 and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

18:4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The greatest in the kingdom is he who humbles himself like the child. (18:4)

One of the attractive natures of children is to simply depend on people around them, because they are powerless. Adults can hardly become innocent like children.

Doves live in flocks and depend on each other. It seems that it is **the innocence of doves**. Human beings originally were not made to live alone. They are made to live before God. However, they committed sin before God and eventually came to walk in the labyrinth.

God saved us through Jesus Christ. Jesus taught us to become innocent like children and doves.

It is the paradoxical truth.

In this world, they say if they show their weak attitude, they would be defeated. They are taught that they must become winners. However, the Bible teaches the paradoxical truth. **Furious battles! → Under stress → Become exhausted.**

Even if you try to do something beyond your power, when people around you come to realize your true being, they will leave you. The true way of establishing credibility is to live honestly and innocently.

Let us go back to the subject. Jesus said, **“Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”**
Then, how should we live?

3. The Importance of Maintaining a Balance

Jesus said, **“Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”**

Let us summarize the story briefly now.

Be wise as serpents ⇒ Serpents’ wise behavior (The ability to read the other person’s mind to live)

Be innocent as doves ⇒ Doves’ dependent behavior (A child’s strong dependence on their parents)

However, we sometimes lack being wise as serpents and being innocent as doves. There are only a small number of people who have both characteristics.

Jesus said,

10:16 “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

As you understand, what we need are **the habits** that serpents and doves have.

He who has these two habits is Jesus Christ only.

Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Then, how can we learn from Jesus? We learn it from Jesus’ way of life. Daily devotional time is very important. It is the time that we become quiet before the living God and read the Bible and have a conversation with God through prayers. It is important to have fellowship with Jesus.

We should look Jesus our master (example), rely on Him and follow what He said. We, sheep, keep living among wolves when we follow Jesus. It means that Jesus who is the good Shepherd

protects us with His life.

Conclusion

The Title of the Message: "Switch on, Let Us Be in the New Daily Life!"

—The Two Habits—

We studied two important things on how to live in **the coronavirus pandemic**. The coronavirus peril seems like it will last for a while. We do not see the end of the battle. Even so, we are all right when we follow Jesus.

The Bible records,

"Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:5)

Let us conclude the message by reading the today's Scripture.

10:16 "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

* God bless you!