

February 28, 2021

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "The Time to Return Home"

—Living in God's Grace—

Text: 1 Peter 4:3~6

4: 3 For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.

4:4 With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;

4:5 but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

4:6 For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

Introduction

The title of my sermon today is We Are Really Excited for The Time to Return Home. I sometimes think about my hometown. Generally, one's hometown is the place where they were born and raised and feel relaxed and comfortable.

I was born in Taipei, Taiwan. I was taken to Japan on a repatriation ship when I was a child. I lived in Nagoya city until I was 22 years old and then I went to Germany and lived there until I was 35 years old. I came back to Japan and lived in Wakayama, in my wife's house. Then I moved to Sakai city and now I live in Osaka.

I think that the 22 years before I went to Germany was the preparatory period to do the Lord's plan. When I look back my life, I came to understand that the Lord called me and made me to build Dusseldorf Japanese Christian Church. Then the Lord guided me to Sakai City for the purpose of building Sakai International Bible Church. Like that, the Lord finally made me move to Osaka to start Kitahama International Bible Church.

It is likely that the next place the Lord will take me will be heaven where the Lord reigns (the kingdom of heaven). I realize that we are travelers in this world. Our hometown refers to the place where we live peacefully. Christians have the kingdom of heaven. I believe that is my true **hometown**.

I have never been there, however, the Bible writes that our hometown is an amazing place. Therefore, I am really looking forward to going there.

By the way, recently it has been reported that the number of people who met God the Creator and

became Christians abroad and returned home, seem to be more than those who become Christians in Japan. It is very blessed to become a Christian. In our church, there are some Christians who met Jesus Christ in foreign countries and believed in Him and returned home. It is God's grace.

Mr. Abe Tetsu, who was one of my old friends, was a layman and an evangelist. He lived in Norway and visited Japanese people (or people who spoke Japanese) around European countries and preached the Gospel at his own expense. There is **a prayer house** even now in Norway that he started, and Mr. and Mrs. Mori, who have succeeded his spirit, work for the gospel.

Mr. Abe was a very impressive man. He was a large income earner and donated 60% of his income to God. He bought plane tickets at his own expense and visited countries in Europe. On top of that, he never received rewards or transportation expenses. He came to Dusseldorf many times, where I was working for the gospel. He also was a pioneer of the Japanese Speaking Church in Paris today.

His life was like that the Scripture records as below.

Matthew 25:23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

Many Japanese churches were founded by these evangelists who were laymen. They were forerunners of faith who did precious work faithfully by using talents that God gave them. The Bible teaches us important lessons today. Let us study these lessons that the Bible teaches us according to the following two points.

Main Points

1. The Life Lessons that the Bible Teaches

1) A Faithful Servant

Jesus Christ did many works and spoke many sermons during His public life. In particular, He taught about the secret of the kingdom of heaven by using various parables. One of them is the parable of **a faithful servant**.

Please open [Matthew, Chapter 25 14~30](#).

Let us grasp the story first.

A certain master entrusted his wealth to his servants and went on a journey. He gave five talents to one of them, two talents to another one and one talent to another according to their ability. (In those days, one talent was worth 6,000 denarius. One denarius was worth about a day laborer's wage.)

He who had received five talents, did business and made another five talents. Like him, he who had received two talents, made another two talents. However, he, who received one talent, did as below,

25:18 But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his

master's money.

After a long time, the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

The master called the servant who had received 5 talents.

25:20 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.'

25:21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

He called the servant who had received two talents. He also made another two talents.

25:23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

He called the servant who had received one talent.

25:24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,

25:25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.'

25:26 But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?

25:27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.

25:30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

My friends. What did Jesus try to teach us thorough this **parable**?

- ① The central person of **the parable** is the worthless servant. It refers to the teachers of the law and the Pharisees in Jewish society of those days. It points out their attitude towards the law and God's truth.
- ② The next lesson that we learn is that it does not depend on how many talents someone has, but how they use it. God does not ask him to do things beyond his ability, but He expects us to fully use his ability. Talents are not equally given to us; however, we are asked to equally make efforts to use them. We should use what we are given to do God's work, whether it is big or not.
- ③ Another point we learn is that he who does not make any efforts should be punished. The servant, who had received one talent, did not lose it but he did not use it. He seemed to think that his talent was so little that it is useless and helpless to do anything. He did not take a risk of helping others.

My friends, here we see a universal lesson about life.

It teaches us to use the abilities that we were given. If we do not use them, they may be taken

away. The lesson about the universal truth is that we should use the talents that God has given us for God and for people.

2) Applying the Parable

- ① We are like servants who have received talents from God. God has entrusted us with how to manage and use them to live. How about you? How do we manage talents that we have received?
- ② We should remember that the day will come soon when we must appear before the master and account for what we have done.

The Bible records as below,

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

* It is an important life lesson that Jesus taught. Peter must have heard the parable directly beside Jesus. Since he saw that Jesus was the true Messiah, as one of leaders of the early church, Peter taught on this topic and how to apply it.

Let study the second point.

2. Leading Life in God's Grace

1) The Past Where They Lived to Satisfy Desires

As you know, Peter, the author of the epistle, sent the letter to the Jewish Christians. Their lives before they met Jesus Christ were like those of worthless servants. Peter looked at their lives and wrote as below,

4: 3 For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.

It seemed that they were indulged in drinking and sensuality. On top of that, they worshiped idols that were made by human hands. However, in this situation, they realized that their lustful lives were empty and foolish. They decided to break away from the lives that were controlled by desires. And they became Christians.

Peter said to them, **“For the time that is past suffices”**. There was a possibility that they returned to their old lives because there were temptations that led them into the lustful lives around them.

2) Temptation and Judgement

Peter continues,

4:4 With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;

The lives of Christians that were greatly changed were incomprehensible for their old, bad companions. They were suspicious of Christians who did not want to go to drinking parties or

do filthy deeds. They were not interested in them, who they used to hang out with.

The new Christians were surely exposed to slanders and rumors. “You seem strange, you are odd fellows, you are hypocrites, you look arrogant, who do you think you are?” The Christians might have been harassed and were bullied in that situation. They may have thought that they would rather compromise and go back to the old life.

Peter said to them, **“For the time that is past suffices”**. He also advised them in verse 5.

4:5 but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

It is needless to say that he, **“who is ready to judge the living and the dead”** refers to God. Those who lead lives only to satisfy their desires will stand before God who judges all the people. They are judged by God.

The Bible clearly teaches God’s judgement. It is not true love if it speaks only good things that are pleasing to the ear but does not speak the truth. Yes, God is love. However, He is the Holy One and judges the world by His justice. He never overlooks anything. He directly judges sin.

The Bible records as below,

Hebrews 9:27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgement.

However, God is the One of grace. God punished Jesus Christ, His only Son, in our place. That is God’s salvation. Therefore, we should report a positive outcome before the Lord like servants who received talents. However, we are not judged by God. How thankful we are!

Peter continues.

3) Living in God’s Grace

4:6 For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead,

The Scripture above is difficult to interpret. It means that the gospel was preached to those who are alive because they should prepare for the judgement. People are given a chance to listen to the gospel while they are alive.

4:6 ...that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

Christians who return to God will also meet death, which is the wages of sin. No one can avoid death. We are judged as human beings in the flesh.

Non-Christians may make a mockery of Christians, “Oh, even Christians have sufferings and die an unfortunate death.” However, death passes away, and Christians live in the spirit the way God does.

Peter records in Chapter 3,

3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might

bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

My friends. We stand before God as human beings who are put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit eternally. How happy we are! We do not need to fear unnecessarily. We stand before the merciful God the Father in heaven and it is the time of joy for us. It is our true home.

The day will come soon that the saints who believe in God come before Him to report their works on the earth. At that time, Jesus comes to us and says, "This is my beloved child." How blessed we are! Let us give thanks to the Lord from the bottom of our hearts and praise Him.

Conclusion

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God spoke to us today. How blessed are the saints who were forgiven of sin by Jesus Christ!

Let us conclude the message with the following two points that God taught us today.

- 1 . We should make the best use of the talents God has given.
- 2 . We should live in God's grace..

Let us read the following verse and pray to God together.

3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.

* God bless you!