

November 28 2021

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (the First Advent Sunday)

Messenger: Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "The Light of Hope Has Come"

—The Lord Needs—

Text: Matthew 21:1-9

21:1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,

21:2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.

21:3 If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.

21:4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

21:5 "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

21:6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.

21:7 They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on.

21:8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

21:9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!

Introduction

1. We have the first Advent Sunday today. Isn't it amazing how fast time flies by? Christmas is just around the corner. What does Advent remind you of? I am sure each of you has the special memories of the Advent season.
- A typical symbol of Advent is an Advent wreath. It is a ring made of green fir branches with four candles on its top. Another candle is placed right in the middle of the wreath, which symbolizes Jesus Christ. The first candle is lit on the first Sunday of Advent. The second, third and fourth candles

are lit in sequence. When the fourth candle is lit, Christmas begins. We light the candle in the middle of Christmas Day.

- By the way, these candles have symbolic meanings. The first candle means “**expectation**”, the second one means “**preparation**”, the third one means “**light**” and the fourth one stands for “**promise**”.
2. We would like to consider “expectation” today, the first day of Advent. As we read today’s text we understand that the Jews in the day of Jesus were eagerly waiting for the Messiah. People were expecting that the Messiah would set them free from control of the Roman Empire.
- The crowd has heard about Jesus and His coming to Jerusalem. They were greatly excited and welcomed Him shouting and spreading their cloaks on the road. They shouted, “**Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!**” (verse 9) They shouted enthusiastically **Hosanna! (Save us now!)** in “**expectation**”.
 - **The Son of David ⇒ It means the Messiah**
Hosanna ⇒ It means “Save us now”.
This is also the shouting of all human beings.
- By the way, what expectation do we have for our life? Everyone wants and “expects” to lead a happy life. He who leads a life with expectation becomes positive and active because expectation gives him motivation and hope. Two points follow.

Main Points

1. God Has His Own Plans.

1) The Plans of The Lord

God the Creator is "God of order", not the One of disorder. Therefore, He has plans for human beings. Our properties and time belong to us, but God has also His plans for them. I have been living for 75 years and I come to realize that God has had plans for my life when I look back my life.

- I received Jesus as Christ (my Savior) and became Christian when I was a 14 years old boy . I went to Germany to study at the university at the age of 23. As God called me for His ministries at the age of 30 and I began to preach the Gospel to Japanese speaking people in Germany. From that,

Düsseldorf Japanese Christian Church was born.

- I also entered the former Eastern European countries under the Iron Curtain at that time and began to preach the Gospel. Thankfully, I had taken part in bringing love from Japan to churches and Christians under persecution. I returned home at the age of 35 with my wife and three children. Then, God used me to build Sakai International Bible Church in Sakai City. I was 40 years old at that time. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, God had the plan to hold “Bible seminars” among businessmen regarding European situations. The Bible Study, the Bible Lecture Meetings and a Monday evening worship service (called Praise Worship today) have been developing from that business seminar. I know the Lord really had plans. Kitahama Church was born about 22 years ago from my business seminar as God had planned.
- God has done everything. As for me, I had nothing but God has given me time for doing His ministries. It is the Lord’s plan.

2) The Lord’s Plan for the Owner of the Colt

- By the way, what did the Lord ask the owner of the colt for? ⇒ It was to make a sacrifice in faith; he offered his thing (the colt of the donkey). The important point was that the Lord spoke first and gave him His Word.
21:3 If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.
- The Word of the Lord has authority, power, a guarantee, and also promise. We often come to understand the meaning of God’s plans later. However, God sometimes gives us the Word and guides the way to go in advance. We need “faith” to follow it. The Bible writes that the owner of the colt would send them right away and write nothing more of it.
- Faith means to accept simply. Basically, faith shouldn’t be so complicated. Man gains various experiences along the way of leading a life and improves knowledge and skills. If he acquires rich experiences he would be a person of rich humanity. On the other hand, if he had a bitter relationship with people, he would not trust them easily. However, relationship with God is quite different from such one of human. **“Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame”. (Romans 10:11)**

- The Bible says, **“If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)**
- The Bible teaches the simple truth. If we confess that Jesus is the Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved. This is the Gospel of Jesus that the Bible teaches. (Good News)

3) **The Owner of the Colt was Used by the Lord.**

- Some people say that this story is too good to be true. Some others say that the donkey and its colt were tied there by accident. There are several theories about this text. However, I am sure that we can learn the important lesson from this part. Even if we think the situation is strange and coincidental, it isn't strange and coincidental for God Himself. That is, ⇒ the owner was used by the Lord.

We come to know by context that he was the faithful man. Jesus said, **21:3 If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.**

- **and he will send them right away. ⇒ “faithfulness”**

“Faithfulness” is to follow God willingly as one knows He takes care of.

① Faithfulness is to follow God willingly.

② Faithfulness is to accept as it is what God of order does.

My friends, God is present in every thing even if it seems to occur coincidentally.

- The Bible teaches that even not a hair falls to the ground apart from God's will.

The problems are;

① How we can understand unreasonable things (natural disasters, unexpected accidents, unhappy incidents).

② The difficulty to accept the God of order.

{Illustration 1} “Has She Lost the Faith? Or, Has She Had no Faith from the Beginning?”

- **Ian Leitch, a Scottish evangelist told a story as the following;**

He was asked by a company president to give a message to company employees. After the meeting a woman came to meet him and said,

- **“Mr. Leitch, I had a traffic accident at the age of 22 and lost my precious boyfriend. Since then I had undergone major surgeries many**

times and finally I am able to lead a normal life. But I lost faith in God. I can't understand why God gives me such hardships.”

- Ian Leitch gave a short prayer and said, “I tell you a story. Do you know the checking way of hull examination of the luxury liners such as Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary? They don't water ships with a hose at a dock for checking if they leak or not. They run ships to the sea and test. They run the test to check if the ship floats on the ocean, not make it sink down.

Like this, our faith comes to show if it is genuine or not when it is caught up in the turbulence in our life.”

- Leitch asked her, “Please answer me frankly. Have you lost your faith or have you had no faith from the beginning?” She answered, “Mr. Leitch, you are right. I have had no faith.”

- My friends, now you already understand what I am going to tell you. We learn faith through experiences. Disciples of Jesus also learned like us. Jesus sent two disciples to the owner and gave an important lesson to learn faithfulness.

2. Characteristics of a Man Who is Used by God

1) God's Grace

Those who trust in God are those who are faithful to God. God blesses such people. God's blessing is an honorable gift. The name of the colt's owner was not written in the Bible, however, his story has been told for more than 2000 years. Have you ever heard such a great honor? This text teaches the following two things —

① Fulfillment of the Prophecy of Zechariah

If Jesus is the Messiah the Messianic prophecies in the Bible must be fulfilled.

“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Zechariah 9:9

- The owner of the donkey and its colt was used for the fulfillment of the prophecy in the Bible.

② The Other Teaching is about the History of the Jews.

It is difficult to understand for the Gentiles, but only the Jewish people understand it.

- This is the one of tragedies in the history of Jewish people. Jerusalem was attacked and seized in B.C. 175 by Antiochus Epiphanes. He banned Judaism and brought the Greek lifestyle, customs and the way of worship into the Jewish society. He intentionally blasphemed the temple. He made an offering of pig flesh, which was unclean for the Jews, at the altar and sacrifices to Zeus the god of Olympia and made a small room in the Temple for registered prostitutes.
- Sometime after, the Maccabees brothers began to resist and finally regained Jerusalem and purified the Temple and re-dedicated it to God.
- This event is recorded in the Second Book of Maccabees 10:7. “The crowd rejoiced with waving the branches of palm tress.” Therefore, Jesus seemed to think about the event above and enter Jerusalem to cleanse the Temple.

2) Those who Followed Jesus Faithfully

- Now, let’s consider about God’s grace for those who followed faithfully in faith.

① Simon Peter, a Fisherman of the Lake of Galilee.

5:3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. The Gospel According to Luke

- The One who created heavens and earth became humble and asked a fisherman. “To ask” originally means “to beg” in German. (The Luther Bible says: “bitten” means to plead from the heart as if a beggar is begging.)
- The boat Jesus asked for was a precious one for Simon Peter. If he had had not offered it, the subsequent story wouldn’t have developed. He received Jesus’ Word faithfully.

③ A Boy who Offered Two Fish and Five Loaves of Bread

The Gospel According to Mark

6:37 But he answered, “You give them something to eat. They said to him, “That would take almost a year’s wages! Are we to go and

spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?

6:38 “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.”

6:39 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass.

6:40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.

6:41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all.

6:42 They all ate and were satisfied,

- It must have been a great experience for people who happened to be there. The boy’s small amounts of “bread and fish” were offered. Jesus was the source of blessings. People were faithful to the Word of Jesus. Their faithfulness brought them significant blessings of being satisfied.

④ Joseph of Arimathea Took the Body of Jesus

- After Jesus’ death on the cross, Joseph of Arimathea who was a prominent member of the Council came to Pilate to ask for Jesus’ body. He required courage to ask for the body of a sinner. Especially the Jews hated to touch the dead. It was an unclean act.

Leviticus

21:11 He must not enter a place where there is a dead body. He must not make himself unclean, even for his father or mother.

- But the Gospel According to Mark writes as below—

15:43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body.

15:46 So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

- Joseph must have taken great courage to do so. However, he had an obsessive desire to take Jesus’ body instead of worrying about his status. The Bible writes about him, “**who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God**”. He was expecting the kingdom of God. His eyes were focusing on

Jesus the Lord.

3) Those three above have something in common. ⇒ “response in faith”

① **Faith is to make sacrifices.** However, they didn't make sacrifices unwillingly. As they had trust (faith) in Jesus, their sacrifices were not compulsory ones.

② **Driving source in faith** Then, what caused them to do so? ⇒ It was “complete trust in Jesus”. What is Jesus like? The Bible writes about Jesus as the following.

It is written in the Epistle to the Philippians as below—

2:6 **Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;**

2:7 **rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.**

2:8 **And being found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross!**

- It is so difficult to understand what a painful way Jesus walked. It was a sign of God's love. Therefore, when we look up the cross, we come to see God's love, where we can find “forgiveness” and the “solution” of God.

“Greater love has no one than this; that he lay down his life for his friends.”

The Gospel According to John 15:13

Conclusion

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—The Lord Needs—

- There was the secret of blessings in the Word Jesus spoken. His Word “The Lord needs them” came true as He said.

Now we have learned,

1. The Word of Jesus has authority.

The nature of faith is hidden in Jesus' Word. We should believe that the God of order cares and controls every thing.

2. Faithfulness to the Word of Jesus ⇒ It is the secret to receive God's blessings.

As the owner of the colt was faithful to the Jesus' Word, he was used for the Lord's glorious work.

- How about us? Where can we find the genuine expectation? We find it in Jesus Christ who was born in human likeness. He was faithful to God the Father in heaven.
 - Let's celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ this first Advent Sunday morning. Let's pray to God for a genuine faith (trust) in Jesus.
- * God bless you!