

April 23, 2023

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (Open Church Worship)

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Life is in the Clouds"
 –Trusting in God–

Text: Hebrews 12:1~3

12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

12:2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

12:3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Introduction

Good morning, everyone!

Life is like walking a long journey. The lengths of our lifetimes are different, but they are unique to each person. No one is born by themselves, but our lives are our own. They are very precious.

But the common points of our lives are that we all have **sunny days, cloudy days, and rainy days.**

During **sunny days**, → You will be doing well.

During **cloudy days**, → Your life will be sometimes getting better, and sometimes getting worse.

During **rainy days**, → You will feel down and become lonely and depressed.

Some people say, "**Life is like a gypsy life.**" How do we live our one and only life?

The Bible: It teaches that **life is in the clouds.**

What does that mean?

Usually, when we hear that **life is in the clouds**, we have the impression that something important is hidden from view because of the clouds. This is because when the clouds appear, even the sunlight is hidden. ➡ It is literally **hiding in the clouds**.

The Bible: [Hebrews 12](#)

12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

The Bible teaches that we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses.

The **witnesses** refer to those who (1) were present at the scene, (2) witnessed the event, and (3) can testify. The Bible also records in the plural, **“we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.”** (12:1)

Then, what kind of witnesses are they?

➡ They are witnesses who have experienced God's protection and were guided to the blessed life.

Let us study **the reason** why the Bible teaches the blessed life is to walk in the clouds according to the following three points.

Main Points

1. **There Is Guarantee in the Clouds**

12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

1) **A Pillar of Cloud**

This is a story from a long, long time ago. The Israelites were traveling through the wilderness of what is now the Middle East. The land to which they were headed was the land that God had promised to their ancestors. It was a fruitful land called **Canaan** (a land flowing with milk and honey). This is present-day Israel.

At that time, the living God led the Israelites by **a pillar of cloud** by day and by **a pillar of fire** by night. But in the cloud, God was present. (This is called the Presence of God).

God was alive and led the Israelites. The story is recorded in the Old Testament, which we have in our hands.

The Israelites experienced God's protection and blessings through their leaders (like Moses). On their journey with God, there were witnesses who received blessings. There was God's protection. And they were eventually able to enter the Promised Land. That is the history of Israel (the Old Testament).

2) God Leads His People

The God of the Bible is never changes as He was in the past and still is in the present (He is One of Presence). He is living and really present. Therefore, to trust in that God is to experience the living God

As God once led the Israelites out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land, He leads us now.

Jesus said,

John 10 : 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

The Bible records the relationship between Jesus and those who believe in Him in this way.

The Good Shepherd said as below,

10:11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Here is the real shepherd who loves us enough to lay down His life for the sheep (we who are easily lost). He is Jesus Christ.

The Bible records that the witnesses, who were saved by Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of love, surround us like a cloud. What a blessing! We see the true assurance there.

2. We Are Given Courage

12:2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

1) The Goal of Life

The important thing during the journey of life is to keep our eyes on our goal. If we take our eyes off the goal, we might lose sight of it. It is very important when we keep going throughout the journey of our life.

The Bible teaches, **“looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith”**.

The Bible teaches who Jesus is like.

① **The founder of faith (beginning)**

Jesus showed an example of the perfect faith to us to believe and walk in God.

He has set before us a perfect faith. Jesus is the founder of faith. 私たちが神

② **The perfecter of faith (goal)**

The perfecter of faith is the One who perfected the path of faith. He is the One who has surely completed the journey of more than 30 years, which was like walking on a thorny path. The highest summit was realized at the cross.

The Bible teaches that Jesus **who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**

1) The Victor of Life

③ **Despising the shame, He endured the cross.**

The One who never committed sins was made a sinner and crucified. He shed His precious blood so that sinful people are forgiven and come close to before God.

1 John 1 : 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

④ **He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Perfection to Salvation) ➔ Victory**

Jesus is seated at the right hand of the throne of God as the perfecter of faith.

The right in seating order refers to the highest rank. Jesus is the supreme victor.

***We looked up Jesus as the goal of the victor, because He is the beginning of faith and the perfecter of faith.**

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews records that Jesus **who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.**

What a surprise! It is incredible!

3. We Are Given the Strength to Live

12:3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

When we have assurance in the clouds and courage, we come to have the strength to live. It is the blessing that **only Jesus Christ** can give.

{Illustration}

This is a true story that happened in China many years ago.

They came to know that robbers were coming to raid a village. The Wang family was only one Christian family in that village. When they were in danger, they prayed to God.

It was time for evening prayer. They read Matthew 17:20. It was written, "If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

The Wang family, who had absolutely trust in God, began to pray, "Lord, please build a mountain in front of our house entrance. Then we will not be discovered by robbers."

At night, it began to snow and continued to fall without stopping. The snow was blown away and piled up to hide the house entrance of the Wang family.

The next morning, robbers came and all the houses in the village were looted. However, only one house, that of the Wang family, escaped looting. After the robbers left, neighbors removed the snow in front of the Wang family's house. When they entered the house, Mr. Wang testified about the God who had saved his family in the face of danger.

(From a tract of OMF : Overseas Mission Fellowship)

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "Life Is in the Clouds"

—Trusting in God—

Life is in the clouds. ➔ It is exactly so.

It is a cloudy day where we cannot see anything clearly in future. However, the Bible teaches us that there is the powerful living witnesses of God in that cloud.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

The life surrounded by the clouds is the blessed one. **Why?**

1. Because we see the assurance.
2. Because we are given courage.
3. Because we are given the strength to live.

* God bless you!