

December 3rd, 2023

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (the First Advent)

Messenger: Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: 'Praise be to the Lord!'

—Zechariah's Magnificat—

Text: Luke 1:67~79

1:67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

1:68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

1:69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David

1:70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

1:71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us

1:72 to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant,

1:73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

1:74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear

1:75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

1:76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

1:77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,

1:78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

1:79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.

Introduction

1. Good morning, every one.
2. Today is the first Sunday of Advent. In the next four weeks we will be preparing to celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ, Christmas.
 - The theme of today's message is "Praise be to the Lord!" and this is the really good theme for the first Sunday of Advent. Praising God is very important for the believers who believe in God. Today's text is well-known for "Zechariah's Magnificat", which records the important

story before the birth of Jesus.

- A baby was born, whose name was John, and his parents' names were Zechariah and Elizabeth. John would later be called John the Baptist and became a great man. The Bible records that there has not raised anyone greater than John the Baptist among those born of women. Zechariah's Magnificat was a song of praise to God, given by the father of John the Baptist.
3. Then, why did Zechariah praise to God and sing this song to Him? What kind of person was he? First of all, he was a priest who served at the Temple of Jerusalem.

The Gospel According to Luke

1:10 "When the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.

12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear

- While Zechariah was serving at the Temple, he became startled and gripped with fear. Notice that he experienced fear before he experienced God's grace. This was the beginning of God's story in his life. My friends, we sometimes experience anxiety, dismay and fear in our lives. However, even in those times, God's plan is unfolding.
- We would like to study what happened before Zechariah who was a priest gave "Zechariah's Magnificat" to God.

Main Points

1. The Words of promise

1:13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.

1:14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth,

1) God's promise to Zachariah

- The angel made this promise to Zechariah ⇒
 - ① A son will be given. (He and Elizabeth, his wife had no children for a

long time. Their prayer was answered) And,

- ② God gave his son the name John.
- ③ John will be a joy and delight to Zechariah, and many will rejoice because of his birth.
- The angel had prophesized these things and continued further as below.

1:16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God.

1:17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

- The verses above tell that John invites the people back to the Lord their God and makes them ready for the coming of the Lord.
- By the way, God's master plan was revealed through these promises spoken by the angel, and these promises were actually fulfilled by John the Baptist. The Bible contains many such Words of promise. God has made these promises to show us His plans and His will.
- How did Zachariah receive the angel's message?

2) Zachariah's response to the Lord

- The Bible records as below—

1:20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.

- This verse tells us the response of Zachariah. He became silent until the day he named John. This penalty was caused **by his unfaithfulness**; “he didn't believe the angel's words.” It was a warning from God. But, why did a person such as Zechariah lack faith in God?
- My friends, now we would like to learn what faith means. What does it mean to believe in God? As a priest of Israel who served in the temple, Zachariah was a man who was close to God. He must have studied Judaism and was a well-learned man. He also was from the tribe of the Levites whose duty it was to serve God. Based on these things, there seems no reason to doubt his faith. In the eyes of the

people, Zachariah was a perfect priest.

- Even so, he couldn't believe word of God when the angel spoke to him in a supernatural way. We learn here that the faith is not the matter of human knowledge or his judgment; it isn't matter of how great he is or how much experiences he has.
- Let's remember that there were many teachers of the Law, scholars and learned people in the days of Jesus. Most of them didn't believe in Jesus. Today, many intelligent people and persons of status say that they can hardly believe the Words of the Bible. What is faith, then?
- What is God's criterion for choosing people? Does He choose people who are better than others or who have some attractive points? No, He doesn't. The Bible tells as below—

1 Corinthians, Chapter 1

- 1:27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.
- 1:28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,
- 1:29 so that no one may boast before him.

⇒ Faith is simply trusting in God with simple heart.

Please remember the faith of Abraham.

- However, his attitude encourages us, for God fulfilled His master plan for Zachariah. God made his plan good and chose him as the father of John the Baptist. Here we understand God's grace, choice and blessings. "**Zachariah's Magnificat**" was born from his experience of weakness.
- My dear friends, we are not chosen because we are better than other people. It was only by God's grace, mercy and blessings. How thankful we are. God knows our weaknesses, our mistakes and our times of unfaithfulness. However, God can make us alive. The only thing that God wants from us is to simply trust in Him.

2. The fulfillment of God's promise (God's time has come.)

1:62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child.

1:63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he

wrote, “His name is John.

1:64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed,
and he began to speak, praising God.

⇒ This is “Zachariah’s Magnificat.

1) God’s principle

- My dear friends, we come to understand the precious fundamental rules of God as below—
 - ① God fulfills His promises. Therefore, we do trust in Him. And,
 - ② “The Lord has provided”. That was Zechariah as we also have weakness.
- Even so, “the Words of promise” has fulfilled. We are also called by God. The living God still speaks “Words of promise” to us today.

⇒ God’s promises will absolutely be fulfilled.

2) Zachariah’s response to the Lord

- Then, what should we do? ⇒ we should have simple faith
 - ① Faith like a mustard seed : **The Gospel According to Mark**

4:31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth.

4:32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.
 - ① Faith that moves mountains:

The Gospel According to Mark

11:23 “Truly, I tell you, if you say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea and do not doubt in your heart but believe that what you say will happen, it will be done for you.

- The verses above teach us that it is possible to accomplish impossible things through faith. In the case of Zachariah, “It is true and Amen”. Christmas is coming soon. The birth of Jesus Christ is a wonderful miracle. Mary, who was a virgin, gave birth to Jesus. ⇒ Those who receive it in “faith” are blessed. It is impossible to believe without faith.

- The faith isn't given through blood lines or genealogy. It is not given by knowledge or situations or effort. People can't give faith. Faith is only given by God's "grace". Therefore, we should receive "the Words of God" with simple heart when God speaks to us.

{Illustration}

The Lord gave me the words of my calling about 48 years ago in Germany. That was the Deuteronomy chapter 28, followings;

28:12 The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none.

28:13 The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.

- It was true that His words were so faithful to me, I am very appreciated to Him.
- * What do you think about your faith in the Lord? Do you receive "the Words of God" in faith? Jesus was born of Mary who was a virgin (Christmas). This is the fact that is usually unacceptable. However, faith in Christ begins from this very fact.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: 'Praise be to the Lord!'

—Zechariah's Magnificat—

- The priest Zechariah heard the Words of the angel. However, he didn't give praise to God right away; he went the long way round. But, it became good for his faith and finally he worshipped God and gave the magnificat to Him.

The way he walked ⇒

1. He didn't accept the Word of promise. { his response }
He was given the Word through the angel but didn't believe it. It was unfaithfulness. Even so,
2. The Word of promise was fulfilled. (God's grace)
God's Words are "very true and Amen". God always fulfills His promises.

This is one of the blessings of God's covenant with Abraham.

- We didn't believe in the Words of the Bible at first, yet when the timing of God was fulfilled in our lives, we became "the ones who are praising God."
- What "Magnificat" do we give God on this first Sunday of Advent? I pray that I give "Kuroda's Magnificat" like Zachariah gave. I hope you do like me putting your name instead of Zachariah.

* God bless you!