

Sunday, March 3

KIBC Sunday Worship Service by Pastor Teichiro KURODA

Title of the message: "Big Things Have Small Beginnings."

-God's Kingdom-

Text: Mark 6:32-44

Introduction

• Good morning.

• Dear beloved brothers and sisters, when people find out that a very famous person is coming, numerous people gather with interest. For example, this happened during my time in Germany.

• It was the town where I lived during my time at seminary. The population of the town was approximately 1,000 and it was indeed a small town (I liked the town). The astronaut, James Erwin, came from the United States.

• The venue was a church in town, but so many people gathered there (including from neighboring villages) that the lecture had to be divided into two sessions. I still vividly remember the excitement I felt at that time.

• Likewise, about 2,000 years ago, in the place of present-day Israel, people came to Jesus one after another.

Mark 6:33 But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.

• Jesus looked at the people who gathered there.

Mark 6:34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

The time was evening. Jesus' disciples said the following:

Mark 6:35 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late.

Mark 6:36 Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

Then Jesus said something strange and unexpected.

Mark 6:37 But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

The reaction of Jesus' disciples was a realistic one.

Mark 6:37 They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

• Then Jesus instructed the following:

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

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

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

Mark 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 distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all.

Mark 6:42 They all ate and were satisfied,

Mark 6:43 and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish.

Mark 6:44 The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

• Dear beloved brothers and sisters, an unlikely miracle occurred in this place. Jesus satisfied the hunger of at least 5,000 men (Not sure the total of people if it included women and children). It was a sign of Jesus' "mercy" and supernatural "power."

• What exactly was Jesus trying to teach through this incredible miracle?

⇒ To see the blessings of "The Kingdom of God."

• What is the Kingdom of God like? Jesus spoke many times in the Gospels about the Kingdom of God. Sometimes it was revealed by parables (examples), and sometimes it was demonstrated by signs/miracles. Today's passage is the latter.

• We are not at liberty to explain the "Kingdom of God" as Jesus taught it. But let us consider two points from today's text.

Main Points

1. There is Abundance in God's Kingdom.

• The place where Jesus revealed the "Kingdom of God" to the crowds was "in the middle of nowhere." Jesus said to his disciples in this remote place, [Mark 6:37](#) "You give them something to eat." That is not a good place to start, by any stretch of the imagination. The reaction of his disciples was the following:

[Mark 6:37](#) They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

One denarius is equivalent to one day's wage at that time. Thus, it would have taken 200 days' worth of wages. It would be impossible to supply that much bread "in the middle of nowhere" (common sense). Did Jesus not know this? No. He knew it very well.

Then, why did Jesus give them such instructions?

⇒ He wanted to see their "faith."

• Before that, the disciples had received "authority" from Jesus to heal the sick and cast out demons as His disciples. They were "works" of faith.

Here, Jesus asked (or required) them to practice it in front of a large crowd. But they did not have that much faith.

• Then, Jesus manifested the practice of faith before his disciples and the crowd.

- ① He took five loaves of bread and two fish.
- ② He looked up to heaven.
- ③ He gave thanks and broke the loaves

• That's all Jesus did. It does not say how the five loaves and two fish were distributed to the crowd (5,000 men alone) (the same in the other Gospels).

- We usually think it is a mystery, and wonder how on earth the bread and fish multiplied. We are usually curious to know how the bread and fish were multiplied. But there is no mention of it. Why is that? I thought to myself, "That's all right."

- ① The way God "works" sometimes cannot be understood.
- ② There is no lack (scarcity) in God's kingdom, but abundance (fact).

- I believe that this miracle of the loaves and fishes is a "work" of God manifested through the practice of faith. If the method of multiplication had been described, there would surely have been imitators. But the Kingdom of God, in which God's "works" appear, is not like that.

- And the riches of God's Kingdom are far beyond human understanding. So what should we do to partake of the riches of the Kingdom of God? ⇒ "Faith"

- The reason Jesus said to his disciples [Mark 6:37](#) "You give them something to eat." was to allow the disciples to experience the reality of the Kingdom of God.

- So what can we see from this text? ⇒ Faith

2. There is Mercy in God's Kingdom.

1. Jesus' Perspective on Crowds

[Mark 6:34](#) When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

- The God of the Bible is indeed a God of mercy. We had fallen into sin and were doomed to death. It is only by God's mercy that we were chosen. And instead of judging us, God the Heavenly Father sent His Son Jesus to open the way of salvation.

- Jesus saw the multitude as a flock of sheep without a shepherd. Jesus knew their needs. Our God knows our needs. Jesus said,

[Matthew 6:31](#) So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

[Matthew 6:32](#) For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

2. Jesus was a Man of Mercy.

- What kind of people came to Jesus? They were the sick, the poor, those who were weary, and the weak who had lost the strength to live. At times, He healed with just a single word those who suffered from severe skin diseases (tsarat) which were incurable. Jesus revealed that He is the One who has authority in the Kingdom of God.

- Bartimaeus, who was born blind, called out to Jesus. "Lord, have mercy on me."
- Jesus touched him and healed his blind eyes.
- Jesus lived a life full of mercy. And He said the following.

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

[Illustrations]

Here is Dennis's testimony from Mr. Funakoshi (Missionary) taken on Feb. 15, 2024

- Mr. Funakoshi, a Japanese missionary, visited Dennis for the first time while he was hospitalized at Fantana Hospital in Ukraine. Dennis lost both of his legs during the war. He wondered **"Why? I only imagined two possibilities: return home in good health or be killed in battle. I never thought I would leave the front lines with both legs missing."**

- He took part in the fighting in the Zaporozhye region. They took control of one Russian position, where they were subjected to a heavy attack of grenades dropped by Russian drones. Several soldiers in Dennis's unit were killed instantly, while Dennis jumped into the trench with a badly injured leg. But then a grenade was dropped on him, and both of his legs were badly damaged.

Three days passed with him unable to stand and unaware of his surroundings. Dehydrated and affected by the summer heat, he became dazed and started to hallucinate. In the midst of it all, Dennis said he prayed to God (although he did not have faith in God). God, please give us water." After a while, it began to rain.

- Then he noticed that rainwater began to accumulate in the hanging plastic material that had been stretched over the "dugout huts" destroyed by Russian tanks. He crawled to it and drank the water. He says that it was this water that allowed him to survive.

However, both of his legs became more and more infected and gave off a terrible stench. Ten days had passed since the grenade attack. That day, he saw soldiers approaching from the other side. He was convinced, "The Russian soldiers will find us. We will be killed." He was prepared.

- Then, to his surprise, they were Ukrainian soldiers from another unit. He said he felt God kept him alive. He was rescued. The tourniquet that was wrapped around his leg stayed around his leg for about 240 hours, and the doctor who treated him later was amazed that he did not suffer organ failure.

- Both of his legs were removed at the hospital, but he survived. He says, "I want to do rehabilitation and find out what I can do without my legs. I want to get back to the front lines as soon as possible and help my comrades. He spoke quietly, but Mr. Funakoshi was overwhelmed by the strength of his will hidden within his words. He says that there is no longer any doubt about the existence of God.

- Dennis narrowly escaped death and is a person who received God's mercy. It must have been very special. Dear beloved brothers and sisters, are we not also welcomed into the "Kingdom of God?"

- Jesus said the "Kingdom of God" is like a mustard seed. Faith that begins even as a small mustard seed ⇒ leads us to this blessed "Kingdom of God!" The Kingdom of God is full of mercy.

- Even today, God reveals the "Kingdom of God" to those who believe in Him and walk with Him. John the Baptist said the following when Jesus came.

Mark Chapter 1

1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Conclusion

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• Jesus blessed the crowd by multiplying the five loaves and two fish to satisfy their hunger. There He revealed the reality of the Kingdom of God. Jesus' very presence was the Kingdom of God, rich in mercy.

• Jesus' life was full of mercy. We, too, are saved by the mercy of Jesus and are partakers of the Kingdom of God. It is an exercise of faith.

• I would like to conclude with the following verse.

[Mark 6:37](#) But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

Let us walk this week trusting God and exercising faith.

* God bless you!