

“Way do you look for the living among the dead?” Pastor Takaaki Inoue

1 Corinthians 15:44–50; Luke 23:50–24:8

### ① **【The Burial of Christ】**

Joseph, a prominent council member from the town of Arimathea, asked Pilate, the Roman governor, for permission to take Jesus' body. He took the body down from the cross, wrapped it in linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb hewn out of rock, where no one had ever been buried before. The word “body” appears three times here (verses 52, 53, and 55). The text carefully emphasizes that Christ was not merely a phantom but a real person who truly died and was buried. When a person dies, that is the end. They can do nothing more. Everything comes to an end. However, the Bible teaches that it is precisely from this point—where human beings can do nothing more—that God's own work begins; it is in this realm, where no human hands are involved, that God initiates something new. This is because we live in a world where we believe human works are everything, and we do not know God's world. To such an extent, we have driven God out of our lives, we live ignoring Him, and we are numbed by the devil's poison that says, “There is no God.” Luke writes, “That day was the Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin” (verse 54). Luke tells us that the day when everything ended is a day of preparation for something new to begin.

### ② **【The One who lives = God】**

Early on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared. The first day of the week is what we now call Sunday, but at that time it was not yet a day of rest; rather, it was the day when work began. When they arrived, they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went inside, they could not find Jesus' body. As they stood there, bewildered, two men in dazzling clothes appeared. These were angels. When the women were terrified and fell to the ground, the angels said, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen. Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee: Did He not tell you that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinners, be crucified, and rise again on the third day?” (verses 5–7). In the Bible, “the Living One” refers to God. The prophets often say, “The Lord lives,” and God Himself says, “I am alive.” Therefore, Christ is God. That is why He does not die even when killed. You must not look for Christ among human beings. You will not find Him there. We must not reduce Him to the same level as humans. He is the One who is truly alive, the genuine God-man, and He is incomparable. The Bible teaches that there is no one alive except God, and that all humans separated from God are spiritually dead. Just as a branch withers when separated from the

trunk, all who are separated from God, the source of life, are dead. The people of this world are gravely mistaken. They believe that life exists in this world, and that the dead go to the next world. In reality, this world is filled with sin and death. You can see this when you look at the world as it continues to fall apart today. Going to the Kingdom of God means returning to the source of life. There is no death in God's world. For God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. Therefore, come to Christ. For He alone possesses life. Those who are united with Him will live forever.

### ③ **【Christ conquered death】**

So what is the resurrection? It is not, as in Buddhism, the soul going to heaven. There was no body in the tomb. In Christianity, the resurrection refers to the restoration of not only the soul but also the body. It means that both the soul and the body become imperishable and are transformed into heavenly bodies. To quote Paul, "What is sown is a natural body; what is raised is a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44). The word "spirit" might make one think of a ghost, but here it means "the body of God, a body belonging to heaven." Christ transformed the humanity He had taken on into a new body.

Human beings were not originally created to die. This is because God, who is life, did not create death. Death began because of human sin. Since people sin every day and die every day, they have become accustomed to sinning and have even grown accustomed to death. They regard death as an everyday occurrence, something to be taken for granted. They have become numb to death. However, Christianity declares that death is an anomaly and an enemy of God. It is written, "The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26). Whatever God did not create will surely be removed from this world. God became human in order to destroy this death. For without a human body, one cannot die. And so God Himself, taking on human nature, experienced death, was swallowed up by the world of death, and destroyed death from within. The ancient Holy Saturday prayer conveys this as follows:

● Today, Hell groans and cries out. If only I had not accepted the one born of Mary, it would have been better for me. For he came to me, destroyed my power, broke down the gates of bronze, and, as God, resurrected the many souls I had previously captured.

On Friday, we held a service commemorating Christ's burial. Four people held the four corners of a cloth depicting the dead Christ, and we formed a funeral procession, singing and waving incense as we walked around the church. It must have been around 8:00 p.m. I felt as though I were walking with Christ through the darkness of death. And I felt a deep sense of joy. We do not die alone. We walk through the darkness of death with Christ. That is why I am not afraid. I was

reminded of Psalm 23:4: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.” I felt such joy knowing that there is a God who comes all the way to this world of death.

#### ④ **【Bringing humanity back to life is God's work】**

● There is a letter written by Pope Francis, a Catholic leader who passed away last April, shortly before his death. “To all my beloved children in this world. Today, as one who is passing through this life, I would like to leave behind a small confession. Every day, I have washed my face, groomed myself, and stood before the mirror. I believed that image was ‘me.’ But looking back, it was merely a garment I wore temporarily. We spend our time, money, love, and passion on this body. We wish to be beautiful, not to grow old, not to get sick, and... not to die. But in the end, regardless of my wishes, this body grows fat, falls ill, ages, and quietly slips away from me. In this world, there is not a single thing I can truly call my own. ...All events in this world follow their own course. All we can do is create a little breathing room within that flow. A little give-and-take, a little compassion, a little restraint. That becomes a warm respite for someone. And that warmth becomes the power to envelop the world once again. ...Looking back quietly, this life has been a miraculous journey filled with gratitude. May such a quiet miracle also come to your life. ...”

When I heard the phrase “quiet miracle,” I was reminded of Jesus’ resurrection. I had long wondered why Jesus rose from the dead so quietly. I believe it was because He had let go of all His own strength and entrusted Himself completely to God the Father. It is like Jesus sleeping in the midst of a storm. Raising people from the dead is God’s work. Human beings can do nothing. Pope Francis quietly reflected on his own life and realized that human works are truly small—like “white space.” After all, we cannot even stop the aging or death of our own bodies. Human works are not the main current. The main current is God’s plan. No matter how much people try to interfere, God’s plan moves forward quietly. It is to remove evil, sin, and death from this world, to make humanity immortal, and to transform this world into God’s Kingdom—a state even better than its original form.

Moses said to the people of Israel: “Stand firm and see the salvation the Lord will bring you today... The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” (Exodus 14:13–14) I also say to you: “Stand firm and see the work of Christ’s salvation being accomplished for you. The Lord is fighting against death for you. You need only to be still. Go to sleep with peace of mind. When you wake up, death will be over.” Let us celebrate the end of death. Let us praise and glorify the saving work of God and Christ. Let us go out and proclaim to many people the end of death and the beginning of life.