

Sunday, April 14, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

「Their eyes are open.」 Pastor Takaaki Inoue

II. Corinthians 3:14~18, Luke 24:13~35

① 【Read the Bible as many times as you want】

On the Sunday of Jesus' resurrection, two disciples, Cleopas and Luke, were traveling to the village of Emmaus. Emmaus is a village about 11 kilometers west of Jerusalem. They left Jerusalem and the flock of brothers behind, walking and arguing.

A man named Gaetano Piccolo wrote about this passage:

The first thing that comes to mind when you feel discouraged is to run away. You want to "run away" from a certain situation, a certain relationship, a certain responsibility. Discouragement often includes anger. ... The same thing is happening in this passage of the gospel. Discouraged and tired, the two disciples decide to go home. ... When we are discouraged and angry, we try to find the culprit, or to find meaning or reason. It's frustrating. The two disciples in this passage are like us.

There are times when we just want to drop everything and go somewhere else. Emmaus is the place where God appeared and performed miracles in the Old Testament sequel 1 Maccabees 4:3. It is written as Amouth, not Emmaus. Now it is not possible to determine where it actually was. Luke may have wanted to imply that these two disciples were seeking an image of a glorified Christ that was different from the suffering Christ. Jesus approached them in the form of a traveler and began to walk with them, but their eyes were blocked and they could not see that it was Jesus. When Jesus asked, "What are you talking about as you walk" (v. 17), they stopped with dark faces and told them that Jesus had been killed, that there was no body in the tomb, and that an angel appeared to them and said, "Jesus is alive." The resurrected Jesus is right in front of them, but they have dark faces. The language of angels is the word of God. But in front of us is the dead Christ, the reality that everything is over. They were devastated before the power of this reality. In the face of this reality, the words of the Bible are heard helplessly.

The other day, I went to Kawaguchi Christian Church of the Anglican Church. There was an article like this in the church newsletter there. The ministry began in 1859, the "Order for the Abolition of the Prohibition of Christianity" was issued in 1868, and 55 years later, in 1923, the first Japan bishops were established in Tokyo and Osaka. At that time, Bishop Makim sent a telegram to the United States, saying, "We have lost everything, and all that remains is

When I read it, I thought it was the same in all eras. Senior Christians have experienced the loss of everything many times. How did they bounce back in the face of such a reality? Jesus said to His disciples, "Oh, those who are dumb and dull-minded and do not believe in everything that the prophets said, did not the Messiah suffer like this and enter into glory?" and "He explained what is written about Himself throughout the Bible, starting with Moses and all the prophets" (verses 25~27). "Throughout the Bible" refers to the Old Testament. He explained the Passion and Glory of the Messiah from the Old Testament. When they heard Jesus' sermon, their hearts were "on fire" (Luke 24:32). Their reading of the Bible was wrong. After all, we cannot understand the Bible without being taught by Jesus. As Psalm 71:17 says, "God, since my youth you have always taught me, and till this day I have preached marvelous works." This is because what comes from God can only be unraveled by God. When we read Psalms 105~107, we can see the image of God patiently intervening with Israel without abandoning Israel, which continued to sin. Blessings and disasters come repeatedly, but the subject is "the Lord." The Lord, not man, is doing everything. We can see that trials are God's plan and to strengthen people's faith. The first way to get back on your feet is to keep reading the Bible, even if nothing moves you or resonates with you. In doing so, we can see how loving God is.

② 【The sacrament opens your eyes】

Eventually, they reach their destination village, but Jesus "seemed to be about to go on" (Luke 24:28). They forcibly held him back, saying, "Come and stay with me, for it will soon be evening and the sun is already setting" (verse 29). "When they sat down to eat together, Jesus took the bread, said a prayer of praise, broke the bread and gave it to them, and their eyes opened and they saw that it was Jesus, but they could not see Him." (verses 30~31). The four actions of "taking bread," "chanting prayers of praise," "tearing," and "passing" are the same as in the sacrament. The eyes of the disciples did not open in the sermon, but in the sacrament their eyes were clearly opened. The second thing we need to do to get back on our feet is the sacrament. What do we see in the sacrament? It means that Jesus can be seen. Here, Jesus, the guest, not the disciples, blesses and distributes the bread for dinner. In other words, it gives life. In the same way, partaking of the sacrament shows us that we are not living by ourselves, but that we were actually being made alive by Jesus. He is more concerned about my body than I am. There are people who want me to live more than I do.

③ 【The secret to cheering up = Christ's zeal changes people】

When their eyes opened, they could no longer see Jesus. If you can't see it anymore, you don't need to see it anymore. They talked to each other, "When He explained the Bible, our hearts were on fire" (v. 32), and they immediately turned back to Jerusalem. It represents that they have begun their journey of faith again. The worship of sermons and sacraments has the power to make a U-turn in life. It has the power to lift us up to heaven as we fall to the earth. I think that when we feel lethargic or mentally tired, it is when we think, "It's the same no matter what we do, it's just ridiculous," or "I'm the only one who has to work hard, I'm lonely."

I think it was Chesterton, but I wrote something like this. "Children play the same game over and over again because they are full of life. The characteristic of life is that it is not averse to repetition. God says to us today as well. "Let's do it again!" Peter was afraid of being martyred, and when he was about to flee leaving the believers in Rome, Christ was standing at the end of the road. Peter asked, "Lord, where are you going?" When I heard "Quo Vadis Domine," the Lord said, "I will crucify again for my people in Rome." Hearing this, the story goes that Peter returned to Rome and was martyred.

Even if we run away, Christ will never run away. Even if we run away, he will chase us and walk with us. Even when we give up, Christ never gives up. Even when we throw away responsibility, Christ continues to take responsibility for what we threw away. No matter how many times you fail, they will be waiting for you at the starting point. Today, Christ will come to Miyakojima Church first and wait for us. That's why we say, 'Let's do it again!' You can feel that. Let us remember the figure of Christ. And let's stand up.