

Sunday, June 9, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

「What is true worship」 Pastor Takaaki Inoue  
Philippians 3:2~9, John 4:16~30

**① 【Confession of sin = To receive grace】**

This is a continuation of last week's story. At Jacob's well in Samaria, Jesus called out to a woman, "Give me water to drink" (v. 7). From there, she and I will talk about water. Suddenly, Jesus said, "Go and call your husband here" (v. 16). She has been married to five men and divorced them, and she has not been married to the current man, so she replies, "I don't have a husband." Then Jesus said, "You had five husbands, but it is not your husband who is with you now. (v. 18). Why did Jesus talk about her personal life here? It was to get her to confess her sins.

● In the Orthodox Church, you cannot partake of the sacrament without confessing your sins. Confessing sins is called "confessional secrecy" and has become a sacrament. Before the service, I go to the priest and confess, but it takes about 30 minutes. But they don't want to confess their sins, so even if there are 50 people in worship, there are not 10 people who receive the sacrament. It was the same with Catholicism in the Middle Ages. I only partook of the sacrament a few times a year. Therefore, we began to include a "joint confession" in our worship services and partake of the sacrament by reciting it.

Why do we need to confess our sins? It is to create a humble soul. It is only when our sins are exposed that we are not made naked. A naked person can no longer boast or make excuses. But if this is not the case, the water of the Holy Spirit cannot enter. No matter how much rain falls from the heavens on a hard stone, it will not soak into it, but it will all flow away. In the same way, even if the Holy Spirit descends, it will depart from the proud and stubborn who do not admit their sins. And even if we don't confess, the Lord sees and knows all my sins. Again, Jesus knew about her sins even before she confessed. She also did not confess everything, but only said: "I don't have a husband." You don't have to tell them everything. Just by confessing with your own mouth, "I have sinned," God will give you great grace. Chrysostomos of the 4th century also said:

● God does not make you confess your sins to punish you. It is to forgive. Nor do you make your sins confess for God to know. It is to let you know how heavy your debt will be.

Therefore, the opening prayer of the service must always include a "confession

of sin." God is "the God of the repentant" (Manasseh Prayer 13), not the God of the unrepentant. However, in The United Church of Christ in Japan, we no longer "confess our sins" in worship. Some groups no longer even use the word "sin." I think it's a big problem. There is a need for reform.

## ② 【Where should I worship】

"Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem" (v. 20) The woman thought Jesus was a prophet and asked him where to worship. The work of the prophet was to point out sins and to tell them where they would be forgiven. The woman didn't just want to hear where to worship, she wanted to know where her sins could be cleansed. I think the woman was excluded from the Samaritan worship and did not go to the service. She must have expected the answer, "Go to Jerusalem," but the answer that came back was, "Believe me, woman, for the time will come when you will worship the Father in a place that is neither this mountain nor Jerusalem." (v. 21). You don't have to go to Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans worship, or to Jerusalem as far away. He said that true worship is not a matter of location. He told us that we could have true worship wherever we were, and that the time would come when we could receive the remission of our sins anywhere. Just because it's a cathedral doesn't mean you can worship the truth.

## ③ 【Only Christ knows God】

Jesus says to the woman: "Ye worship what you do not know, but we worship what you know, for salvation comes from the Jews." True worship is not possible for those who do not know God. They don't know what to worship. God first revealed Himself to the ancestors of the Jewish people. But it was only to a very small number of people, and only a small part of it appeared. But God revealed Himself perfectly to Christ. "The Son is a reflection of the glory of God, a perfect manifestation of His essence" (Hebrews 1:3), so the Lord says, "I know Him" (John 7:29). Only God of the same nature knows the eternal God. Creation cannot know God. Only Christ, the Son of God, truly knows God. Therefore, real worship began with Christ and was passed on to the apostles, then to foreigners, to the Church Fathers, and to the Church. Our worship is a sacred tradition that has flowed from Christ. Cultists are eager to dedicate their money, time, and lives to a false god taught by a false messiah who does not know God. It's a waste. "If you remember with what words I have proclaimed the gospel, you will be saved by this gospel, or your very belief will be in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:2)

#### ④ 【Worship in spirit and truth】

"The time will come when those who worship the Father in spirit and in truth will worship him. ... God is a spirit. Therefore, those who worship God must worship in spirit and in truth." (vv. 23~24) The "spirit and truth" here does not refer to the "spirit and truth" of man. The "Spirit" is the "Holy Spirit" and the "truth" is "Christ." He is saying that true worship is not possible except through the Holy Spirit and Christ. Worship is communion with God. But sinful people cannot commune with God. The sacrifice of Christ is necessary to take away one's sins, and the Holy Spirit is necessary to believe in Him. Sacrifice is a sacrament (bloodless sacrifice) that can only be understood by the Holy Spirit. Worship without the sacrament is like coming before God without Christ, and it is half-hearted. Worship is fellowship. You can't do it in a one-way street. It is not good to worship without knowing what is being said, or without seeing God. Worship is when things from God come in, God comes to know, when God is illuminated and brightened, and when we are filled with God's joy and life. It is because Christ and the Holy Spirit work that we can truly worship.

After this, Jesus told the woman that the Messiah was "I who am talking to you" (v.26). How astonished she was! "And she went to the town, leaving the water bowl there, and said to the people, 'Come and see. There are people who have guessed everything I have done. Maybe this is the Messiah.'" (vv. 29~30). A woman who had lived in hiding in fear of others opened up about her sins and went out among the people to testify about Jesus. What changed her? It means that even though He is a precious Messiah, He dealt with His sinful self, forgave Him, sought fellowship with Him, and treated Him as an important person. In a nutshell, it is the experience of being loved by God.

#### ●The story of "The Velvet Rabbit" (Margery William)

"The rabbit sewing toy made of sawdust was envious and sad that the boy's attention was directed to a toy that ran around like a real thing with a battery rigidity. One day, the rabbit asks the old wooden horse in the same toy box. What do you mean by real? There's something in it." The old wooden horse replied thoughtfully. "It's not what you're made of, it's what you become real when you're loved over a long period of time. And once it's real, it's real for the rest of your life."

No matter how much material things are given to us, no matter how much inconvenience we have in our lives, we will never be satisfied with them, and we will become lonely and anxious. That's because I haven't yet met the love that makes me real. People are loved and become authentic. Be loved and authentic by Christ.