

Sunday, June 23, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

「Between reality and faith」 Pastor Takaaki Inoue

II. Peter 1:16~21, John 4:43~53

① 【We must be humble and humble】

Jesus said, "Prophets are not honored in their own homeland" (verse 44). Because we have known it since we were children, that knowledge gets in the way and we don't know what it really is. However, when Jesus arrived in Galilee, the people of Galilee welcomed Him with open arms. That's because they saw the miracle of Jesus in Jerusalem. "Miracles" are powerful things that make even the prejudiced admit it. But does a miracle really lead to faith? Having experienced the great miracle of the Red Sea being split in two and being saved from the Egyptian army, Israel easily forgot about it and separated from God. Only 10% of people who experience the miracle of being saved from a cult have faith. It is not faith that people are looking for. It is not salvation but healing, and it is not God, but of this world.

Now, Jesus went to Cana in Galilee. It is the place where the miracle of turning water into wine was performed a long time ago. I think the people of Cana were also expecting Jesus to show them some kind of mysterious miracle. Then came the king's official who lived in Capharnaum. Because his son was sick and dying. Capharnaum is a large town on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, about 32 km from here to Cana. It's quite a journey. The Bible says, "I went down to Capharnaum and asked Him to heal my son" (verse 47). Capharnaum is a large town and Cana is a rural area. Normally, it's "come up," but he asks you to "come down." You can see that you are getting lower. What we need to do for salvation is to humble ourselves. Christ is in a low place. If you want to meet him, you have to get off. Like Zacchaeus, like Naaman, he descends. The same is true when we read the Bible. Don't look down from above, look down at us. Condescending is an attitude of "Oh, I heard, I heard, I know." Instead, like the boy Samuel, he says, "Speak to me, and I am listening." As a servant, I listen to it as if it were an order given to me. Don't forget what you've heard and put it into practice. That is the attitude of listening to God's word.

② 【Do not despise the word of God】

Jesus didn't say to him, "I'll go and heal him." There have been times when others have said so, but here He said, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will never believe" (v. 48), and He asked Him to believe first. But he doesn't have time to talk about faith. I'm desperate. "Lord, come before my child dies" (verse 49). Still, Jesus doesn't want to move, he doesn't want to go. And only one word:

"Go home, your son will live." (v. 50). We can see that Jesus is always looking for faith. The Bible says, "He believed in the words of Jesus and went home" (verse 50). There are no guarantees in Jesus' words. There are no signs. But he believed and went home. I feel like something has been lifted off my shoulders. This is what it means to believe. "By force, at all costs" is not something to believe because there is a force on your shoulders. Such a person will get angry and run to other gods or other people, saying, "I can't rely on Jesus." To believe is not to try to pass one's own thoughts, but to accept the thoughts of Christ. But on the way home, we pick them up and tell them that the child is alive. When I asked him when he was getting better, he said, "His fever went down at 1 p.m. yesterday." The Bible says, "This father knew that it was the same time that Jesus said, 'Your son will live,' and he and his family all believed." (v. 53). Here, too, the word "believed" (v. 53) appears. He "believed and went home" (v. 50) and believed again. I can see that my faith is getting deeper and deeper.

We treat God's word lightly and listen to it lightly. But God's word, once uttered, is always true. Because God's Word lives forever. People say that words alone are not enough, that they are not enough, and that they want certain signs that they can see. But Christ taught us how powerful His words are. Whether in Cana or Capharnaum, his words are valid, everywhere His eyes are seeing, and everywhere His hands are working. Nothing in the whole earth can escape the reign of Christ.

③ [Between reality and faith]

We always live between "reality" and "faith." Hazama means "between".

● The good thing about Japan Christian Church is that there are various teachers and you can meet various people. There are 138 churches and missions in Osaka alone, so there are more than 140 teachers. I have met many teachers, who have helped me and taught me. The other day, a teacher on the Human Resources Committee said, "The number of members in the church is steadily decreasing, and when the number becomes 20, the pastor will become depressed." "Once you get to the point where you're going to fall, you're not scared, and you're depressed because you're half-hearted not to fall. The problem of the current denomination and church is that they are trying to do something with the power of human beings. It's good if you can crush it once. If you fall to the point where you fall, you have no choice but to rely on God. If you pray to God, strange things will happen. You can see God's work. It's more interesting that way. From the time when man's work is finished, God will work." This is my experience.

I read a Christian quarterly magazine, but I couldn't find a single word of God. It's like reading a Communist Party newspaper. It's certainly good to be able to know things you didn't know because it conveys the correct knowledge and information, but the more you read, the darker it becomes and the heavier your heart becomes. That's what I said to the teacher I mentioned earlier when I was in the HR department. He has served as chairman of social committees in the Diocese of Tohoku and the Diocese of West Tokyo. He said the social committee was with him. If you only judge the evils of society, denounce the government, and pursue the problems of society, the listeners will gradually grow tired, and no one will become a believer because of it.

● Recently, young nursery teachers have been hurt by the words of senior nursery teachers and immediately say that they want to quit. So I said this during the noon service. "Where do all the worries come from? Is it because there is a problem? Is it because there are people with problems? There is no place or time without problems, and there is no such thing as a person without problems. Trying to eliminate the problem is futile. It is useless to run away from the problem. There are also problems at the end of the escape. It's not because we have a problem, it's because we don't believe it. Children don't worry. Don't worry about failure, don't be afraid. That's because they believe in their parents and the people around them. Belief is the most important thing." Established in 1984 in Urakawa Town, Hokkaido, there is a community activity base for people with mental disorders called "Beteru House". It says this on the website. "It's always full of problems, and today, tomorrow, tomorrow, maybe even tomorrow, maybe all the time. Conflicts in human relations that are inherent in the management of organizations and business also occur on a daily basis." Mr. Mukaiyachi, who launched it, says: "If the problem is that there is a problem, then the person with the problem cannot live. Even if there are problems, it is fine! Are.

Nietzsche said, "Christians have no joy," but I think it is the church that speaks of hope. Who would be a Christian if we didn't tell them that the reality may be harsh, that the future may be bleak, that there may be a lot of problems, but that we have hope? It's funny because the church only talks about problems and not hope. Why is it okay to have problems? Because Christ loves and saves the troubled world. It is because Christ carries us with our problems. Christ does not give in to evil, but creates good out of evil. The word of Christ will surely come true, and the world will surely be saved. So it's okay, it's going well. It is useless to only look at reality. In the same way, we must put our hope in God. That's where salvation comes from.