

Sunday, July 7, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

「Discarded Stone」 Pastor : Takaaki Inoue
Acts 4:5~12, Mark 13:1~13

❶ 【Are you looking at these big buildings?】

As Jesus was leaving the temple precincts, one of His disciples said: "Look, sir," he said, "what a wonderful stone, what a wonderful building." But Jesus says, "Are you looking at these big buildings? Not a single stone will remain on top of the other without being broken here." (Verses 1~2)

Mr./Ms. Have you ever been to Osaka Castle? When you enter the Otemon gate, a huge stone wall appears in front of you. I think it is a stone brought by Kato Kiyomasa. Isn't it the largest in Japan? Jesus' disciples were also impressed by the magnificent stones and buildings of the temple and were proud of them. The original temple was started by King Herod in 19 BC and completed in 70 AD with 100,000 workers and 1,000 interior decorators. It took about 90 years to make. At the time of Jesus, it was still under construction. However, the year after its completion, the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem and set fire to the city, completely destroying it. What an irony! Jesus said that no matter how splendid the things of this world may seem, they will inevitably collapse.

Here Jesus said to his disciples, "Are you looking at these big buildings?" People are attracted to things that are beautiful, big, strong, and magnificent. I think this is okay, this is certainly safe. But Jesus said, "Are you looking at this?" What about everyone, Mr./Ms.? What are you looking at? What we have to see is Christ himself. For us Christians, the true temple is Jesus Himself. "Tear down this temple, and I will rebuild it in three days." (John 2:19). Jesus was resurrected from the "discarded stone" of the Jews, and it became the cornerstone, and the church was built on it. The visible temple on earth has vanished, but the temple of Christ has been resurrected, remained forever, and spread throughout the world. And each believer who is united to Jesus is also a temple, a stone piled on top of its parent stone. Peter said: "The Lord is a precious living stone, chosen by God, forsaken by men, and let yourselves be used as a living stone to build up a spiritual house." (1 Peter 2:4~5)

The Church will last forever. It is built on the foundation of the eternally living Christ. But if we turn away from Christ, any great church will collapse and disappear. A church is not a building. It's inside. What kind of faith do you have, what kind of worship do you have, and what kind of believers do you have? The heart of the church is Christ. If we begin to rely on anything other than Christ, the church will collapse. What is the foundation and what is the support of faith?

② 【Christian eschatology】

When the disciples heard that the temple was going to collapse, they asked, "When will this happen, and what will be the signs when it will all come to pass?" I ask. From here, Jesus speaks of the signs that will appear at the end of the world. It is said that false prophets, wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes and famines, conflicts between nations, persecution of Christians, and the separation of parents and children will occur. These are things that have happened in every era. The First and Second Jewish Wars, the collapse of the Roman Empire (Mark 13:14 is about this), World War I, World War II, the plague in the Middle Ages, the pandemic in the 20th century, every time these happened, people thought it was the end of the world. In times of change of government, major natural disasters, and major famines, countless cult groups and new religions have appeared.

●The other day, I was on TV and I was talking to a university professor about the four phenomena that will occur this summer due to the current abnormal weather. (1) Heavy rains, (2) Storms, (3) Droughts and forest fires, and (4) Melting ice. This year, it has been unusually hot, with more than 1,000 pilgrims in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, with temperatures falling to 50 degrees Celsius, India and South America being extremely hot, and disasters caused by forest fires and heavy rains. The temperature of the seawater around Japan is 7°C~8°C higher than the average this year. Since 2000, the average temperature of the earth has risen rapidly, and it is said that it has already exceeded the limit and is impossible to undo. It's been a tough time. UN Secretary-General Mr./Ms. Guterres said, "Humanity has opened the lid of hell," but the world will get worse and worse. I don't think it's a case of war...

The Bible clearly prophesies. The world spirals toward collapse. The spiral is not that it gets worse all at once, but that it gets worse, then a little better, then worse, and then a little better, and so on, and the world moves toward collapse. It's not going to get better. This world will collapse. The world will not change only with the goodwill of human beings, justice and the peace movement. That should be taken to heart. Don't expect anything from humans. "Stop relying on humans, just breathe through your nose." (Isaiah 2:22). Peter also said: "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7), "The present heavens and the earth are to be destroyed by fire... It will be set aside." (Ibid. 3:7) The apostles knew that the world would perish. That's what Christianity has been talking about all along.

③ 【Where is the hope of Christianity?】

So where do you expect? Jesus says in verse 7, "Don't panic, it's bound to happen,

but it's not over yet." And in verse 8, He said, "These are the beginning of the pains of childbirth." Let's sort out "Christian eschatology". When Jesus was crucified, a strange phenomenon occurred. "At twelve o'clock in the afternoon, the whole earth was dark, and it lasted until three o'clock" (Mark 15:33). The Old Testament says that the last day of the world, called the "day of the Lord," will come, and it is prophesied that the sun will darken on that day. "When that day comes, saith the Lord God, I will set the sun at noon, and the earth will be dark in broad daylight" (Amos 8:9), so with the cross of Jesus, the end of the world has begun, and the end of the world will be completed. Even though the body of the Son of God has been destroyed, how can this world remain undestroyed? Therefore, from the cross of Jesus, we entered the end times. We are still in the age of the end times. But at the same time, the restoration of all things will begin with the resurrection of Christ, and eventually a new heaven and earth will descend, and the restoration of all things will be completed. Therefore, it is strange that the end of all things and the restoration of all things are proceeding at the same time in this era. But nothing surprises me. It was the same at the time of Noah's flood. Inside the ark was an old world, but outside the ark a new world had begun. This is Christian eschatology. The extreme weather that is happening now is a groan that the old world is about to end, and a birth pain that a new world is about to be born. St. Feodor of Edessa said, "When man realizes that he is on a journey towards death and the state that follows, he has meaning in this life."

This world, which does not know the resurrection, will become anxious and despair when it sees this abnormal weather. But we Christians have hope only in Christ and His resurrection. The various phenomena that appear at the end of the world are to train our faith and test our faith. This is what was written in Pastor Yasuro Enomoto's book.

●"I recently received a letter from a brother in the Lord, in which he said that an influential minister during the war had strongly preached defense contributions at church meetings, and when he asked, 'Where is the Christianity of the Bible?' he replied, 'I have ears on the walls, and I beware of such remarks, which are a nuisance for the church.' It was written that he was told."

The world and those who belong to the world will be sifted out and disappear, but those who belong to Christ will remain forever. With the cross, death came to an end, and all things came to life. With the cross, the curse ended, and all the blessings of heaven fell upon man. All your sins and curses have come to an end in Christ. And you have become a new person. The cross of Christ is a "sign"

that God bears both human suffering and death. If Christ God is there, no matter how dire the place, it will surely be restored to the Garden of Eden. So on this day, train your faith. Let Christ certainly look like a great tree. Let us continue to live our lives of faith without turning away from Christ and without wavering.