

Sunday, August 4, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

「"Go out of there and stand before the Lord"」 Pastor : Takaaki Inoue
1 Kings 19:8~18, John 15:4~7

① 【Faith lasts only one day, only a moment】

Ahab, king of the northern kingdom of Israel, welcomed Jezebel of Sidon as his queen, and it was this Jezebel who persuaded the king to worship Baal. When Queen Jezebel hears the news that Elijah has killed 450 of the prophets of Baal, she sends a messenger to Elijah, saying, "By this time of tomorrow, I will take your life." When Elijah heard this, he was frightened and immediately fled. He flees from Beersheba into the wilderness, sits under a tree and prays to God. "Lord, enough is enough, take my life. I am not better than my fathers." (1 Kings 19:4) "I am tired, I can do no more. I'm just a person. Why do you let me? Take a life. It's better to be dead." That's my prayer. Elijah's despair is palpable. He is exhausted and lies down and falls asleep. Elijah, who performed the miracle in chapter 18, and Elijah, who escaped in chapter 19, seem to be completely different people. At this time, God looked small in Elijah's eyes, and Jezebel looked big. It teaches that any person, no matter how saintly or great prophet he is, immediately loses his power when he leaves God. People change in a day, or rather, in an instant. Faith is like putting a plug (cord side) in an outlet socket (wall side). If the plug is connected to the socket, the appliance will move. But if it's off, it won't work. We are believers only when we worship, and believers only when we pray. It's like that. Jesus is right when He said, "Apart from Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). People are weak by nature, and the only way to gain strength and courage is to rely on God earnestly. God gave Elijah this test to let him know the inherent weakness of man and to make him pray earnestly to the Lord. However, the Lord repeatedly sent angels to Elijah, who was disappointed and fell asleep, to give him food and water to restore his strength. It is written that he was "strengthened by his food" (Ibid. 19:8), but for Christians, the food on the long journey to heaven is the sacrament. I am strengthened by eating the body and blood of Christ. And Elijah walked in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights until he came to Horeb (Mount Sinai), the mountain of God. It was God's lead, and it was God's plan.

② 【Where are you ~ What are you doing here】

He entered the cave of Mount Sinai and spent the night. Then I heard the voice of God. "Elijah, what are you doing here?" (1 Kings 19:9) This is said twice. Mr./Ms., have you ever heard something similar to this word somewhere? It is very similar to the words God called to Adam when he committed his first transgression, "Where are you" (Genesis 3:9). This is a word to know that man

is not in a right relationship with God and is standing in a place that is far from Him. On the other hand, the phrase "What are you doing here?" is related to mission. Were you created, given faith, and made alive to do it? That's the question. Not only Elijah, but everyone is asking these two questions from God.

● When Pastor Yasuro Enomoto was recuperating from cirrhosis of the liver for more than a year, he was strongly pressed by the words, "Elijah, what are you doing here?" and got up from his bed. Recently, I have come to think that I should talk more directly about the salvation of man through the cross and resurrection of Christ. For many years, I have been telling Bible stories in nurseries and nursing homes, but no one who believes is awakened. I began to wonder if I would end up not talking about what was really important, if I became a pastor to talk about such a disappointment, or if God had put me in this position.

Elijah said, "I have served the Lord with passion, but the Israelites have not obeyed and killed your prophet, leaving me alone, and now they are about to take my life." I answer. Sounds like some kind of excuse. Then the Lord said, "Go out of there and stand before the Lord in the mountains" (Ibid. 19:11). "Standing before the Lord" is an attitude of worship, an attitude of listening to His Word. In the old days, when the Torah was read aloud, people stood and listened. "And when he opened the book, all the people stood up" (Nehemiah 8:6). It means to stand righteously before God and hear His words. When this worship is broken, faith is lost, and fear takes control of the person. Fear comes from unbelief. So if you want to overcome your fears, you have to start with Bible reading and prayer.

③ **[Elijah being trained to hear the voice of God]**

At that moment, the Lord passed by. There was a very violent wind that broke the rocks, but there was no Lord in the wind. Then came the earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake either. Then came the fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire, a quiet whisper was heard. So Elijah covered his face with a cloak so that he would not see the Lord, and came out of the cave and stood in the doorway. People think that God is in great miracles and signs. But God is in a quiet whispering voice. Elijah was expecting a miracle. But God tells us to believe in His Word. It was here that God trained Elijah to hear God's voice. People who are talking about themselves are not listening to what the other person is saying. People who are obsessed with their own thoughts do not listen to other people's opinions. Listen with a blank mind. God whispers quietly, so when we read the Bible or the Psalms, we listen intently. Don't flutter when others are reading. Just listen. The Bible is not a book for study. It is a liturgical

book, a religious book, and something to be heard. The Koran in Islam also means "to be recited." The seminary now is making a big mistake. Because we are researching without asking. You will gain knowledge, but you will not gain faith. It requires lines to be read aloud for hours in the chapel.

④ **【Those who encounter God will be able to see grace】**

The Lord said to Elijah: "Go, turn back the way you came, and go into the wilderness of Damascus" (1 Kings 19:15), and He commands you to make Hazael king of Aram, Jehu king of Israel, Elisha a prophet, and your successor. He goes on to say: "I will leave seven thousand into Israel, all of whom have not knelt to Baal and have not kissed him." (Ibid. 19:18) Elijah thought he was the only one left, but God says, "He left seven thousand people." "Only one" became "seven thousand." There is a story that reminds me of "~only" and "also".

●When asked how many people attend your meeting, a professor at Waseda University named Yoshitaka Sakaeda replied happily, "Yes, seven or eight people have come." Pastor Masato Fujio heard this and wrote: "I often hear people say that there are only a few Christians in Japan, but this is the spirit of 'shika.' Before the five thousand people were satisfied with five loaves of bread, the disciples saw that there were only five loaves of bread. But Jesus saw that there were "five." This is the difference. Don't despise small things. Don't boast about big things. It doesn't matter if it's small or big, the important thing is that there's joy in it. If there is a joy to burst, it is free and beautiful, no matter how small or large it is. Let us go with the faith of 'also.'"

Looking back, I have met and received a lot of help from Christians to this day. It can be hundreds of people. If I wasn't a Christian, I wouldn't have met them. It was all brought together by Christ. I met a lot of foreigners and was enriched. If I had only worked in sales without faith in this world, I think I would have met only my seniors and store clerks. How enriched I have been since I met Christ. His connections are immeasurable. It will continue not only in this world, but also in the next. In the Hereafter, I will meet more saints and be richer. Through the sacrament, He gives us forgiveness and life today. I would like to pray that Christ will continue to grow in perspective.

Let's pray. Lord, I pray that I, like Elijah and Elisha, will open my eyes and see clearly the Lord of hosts who is with me. We can't do anything apart from Christ, but we can do anything if He is with us. I pray that you may speak the word boldly, that you may be healed of your sickness in the holy name of Christ, and that by signs and wondrous works you may make the world realize that He

really exists. amen