

Sunday, August 25, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

「**The Power of Praise**」 Pastor : Takaaki Inoue  
Acts 16:25~34, John 6:11~21

### ① **【By Midnight Praise】**

Acts 16 describes Paul's second missionary journey. Paul traveled with a disciple named Silas. Paul preached in what is now Turkey ~ Greece. Paul had just gone to the Greek city of Philippi. A female slave, possessed by the spirit of divination, followed behind and cried out, "These are God's servants, and they are telling you the way of salvation." This was repeated for many days, and when Paul became impatient and said, "I command you in the name of Christ, get out of this woman," the demon immediately went out, and the female slave could no longer divinate. However, the masters of the female slaves resented the inability to make money, so they seized them and handed them over to the officials. The officials whipped them and threw them into jail. Verse 25 says, "At about midnight Paul and Silas were singing songs of praise and praying to God, and the other prisoners listened intently." The wounds on their backs must have hurt, but they sang songs of praise and prayed to God in the middle of the night in prison. The other prisoners in the prison listened attentively to this praise without saying "noisy" or "shut up." This teaches us that praise and prayer can heal and comfort people's suffering. There is a story that reminded me of the midnight praise. One is an article in a book by Dr. Takashi Nagai, a Catholic who was exposed to the atomic bomb in Nagasaki and died at the age of 41, leaving behind two young children.

●When the atomic bomb exploded, 8,000 of the 10,000 Catholics in Urugami died. There were two girls' schools here, Junshin and Jyousei. All of them were run by women's religious orders, and almost all the teachers from the principal down were nuns. The students of Pure Heart, who had been mobilized to work in the factory, died one after another and were reduced to ashes while singing hymns in the blazing fire. ... The same fate occurred at Jyousei Girls' School. ... At the river's edge, 200 meters east of the girls' school, several choirs of Latin hymns could be heard in the middle of the night. When night fell, the nuns were huddled together and cold.

The other is that during World War II, when Father Kolbe was placed in a starvation cell in the Auschwitz camp, he continued to sing praises, pray, and encourage the prisoners around him until he died in the prison. Once, when I attended Carol Zach's harp healing meeting, I heard that praise can ease the

pain of the sick and give them peace of mind and comfort. It is said that hymns are sung in the monastery around the sick until their death. Dr. Shigeaki Hinohara of St. Luke's International Hospital, who has since passed away, also practiced "music therapy." In his book, he writes:

● Words are placed on the wings of music, and we can easily convey feelings that cannot be conveyed in words. ... Music can also help alleviate pain. In one case, a patient in the final stages of cancer was able to reduce the amount of morphine by one-tenth by being surrounded by music. ... Diseases that could not be cured by medicine can be cured by music. ... Modern medicine, which separates the mind and body, is wrong.

Now and in the past, when you are put in jail, all your belongings are taken away. Neither Paul, nor Silas, nor Father Kolbe had a Bible. All they could do was sing the songs they remembered and pray. I don't know what Paul and Silas praised, but I think it's probably the Psalms. The Psalms were originally meant to be sung to the tune of the pipe. The Psalms are comforting to listen to, as well as to read them aloud. It also gives faith and courage. The power of praise is great. I think the reason why no one escaped when the earthquake occurred and the prison doors were opened was because the prisoners' hearts were filled with praise and healed. It is through this that the jailer family will enter the path of faith. Praise is God's healing method for healing the mind and soul. God heals us every week through music therapy through the church.

## ② 【After reciting a prayer of thanksgiving】

"Now Jesus took the bread and said a prayer of thanksgiving, and then divided it among those who were seated, and he did the same with the fish, and gave as much as he wanted." (John 6:11) In the face of five thousand men alone, five loaves and two fishes would be "of no use" (v. 9), as Andrew says, and "not enough" (v. 7), as Philip says. But Jesus was grateful for the mere five loaves and two fish that the boy had. If it were us, this would be too little and discouraged. Why was Jesus able to give thanks?

There is a famous phrase in the Bible, "Give thanks for everything" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). It's a good word, so I think it's a word that Japan people like even if they are not Christians. But this is followed by the words, "This is what God wants you to do in Christ Jesus." It means to be grateful for everything in Christ. If you think without Christ, it's just a maxim. These words are not just good works that humans can do. In God's eyes, nothing that exists is wasted, and nothing is wasted. Even evil and death are used by God to create good. We are grateful because Jesus Himself is able to take something that is

useless and inadequate and turn it into God's work.

The Bible says, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, those who are called according to His plan" (Romans 8:28) and "You are good, you are all good." (Psalm 119:68). God is the one who works with us and makes everything good. That's why we can be grateful for anything.

● If you catch a cold, you will lose energy. I don't feel like doing anything. Moreover, they do not have a sense of faith. On the contrary, no matter what you do, it will not change anyway, and it will seem ridiculous. When this happens, the work of a pastor is hard. But then I had a thought. Even if I don't have faith and energy, it was Jesus who chose me. The founder of the faith is not me, but Jesus. If I had started, I would have to grit my teeth and do my best, but if Jesus had started, then Jesus would be able to start something for me again. Let's wait until then. I thought that even if I fell to the point of falling, the one who waited there would be the real one, and I would wait to see what Christ would do.

God is always at work. God is working even when I have no faith, and He is working on it even when I am sleeping. Or rather, it's bigger. Seeds sprout while you are awake at night, napping, and napping. When man's work is over, God's work will shine through. Believing in God's work on us, let us leave our unbelief, our helplessness, and our smallness to it. Glory to Christ, shame to me.