

Sunday, September 15, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

[I Know Him] Pastor Takaaki Inoue
Acts 22:6~16, John 7:2~9, 28~29

① 【Tabernacle ~ Nativity】

The early days of Jesus' ministry in Galilee were going well, and wherever the Lord went, many people gathered, and many of them willingly became His disciples. Especially at the time of feeding 5,000 people, Jesus' popularity was at its peak, and the crowd wanted to make him king. But the Lord knew very well that this popularity stemmed from the lust of the flesh (healing of sickness, filling with food). There were few people who were willing to follow Christ because He was God and the truth. After these six chapters, the Lord walks the path of the Passion. At the beginning of chapter 7, we read, "At that time the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was approaching" (verse 2). The "Feast of Tabernacles" was a festival to remember 40 years of tent life in the wilderness. It was a festival not only to remember the hard life, but also to remember that even though God traveled in the wilderness for 40 years, God did not live in high heaven, but descended to earth, traveled with Israel in the form of the Ark of the Covenant, and protected them from suffering. It is celebrated around October and lasts for 8 days. Throughout this festival, water was drawn from the pool of Siloam every day, brought to the temple, and poured on the altar along with the morning and evening offerings. This "Feast of Tabernacles" is now celebrated as the "Feast of the Nativity" for Christians. We remember that 2,000 years ago, God took up His physical body (temporary lodging) and dwelt on earth, and we remember that Christ, the Son of God, will accompany us on our journey in the form of the "Church" until the end of the world. Therefore, we must think that God is not only in heaven, but also on this earth, here, and traveling with us. Being alone is the hardest thing for human beings. I've always been lonely, and I still feel lonely sometimes. But if you are with someone who never forsakes sinners, I think you can overcome the pain of that journey.

② 【Faith is given by God】

In verses 3~4, Jesus' brothers said to Jesus, "Leave here and go to Judea, and show your disciples what you are doing. Since you are doing this, you must show yourself clearly to the world." It is written that it said. The brothers recommended that if you show the miracles you are doing to your disciples in the city, they will all believe in you. However, no matter how many miracles the Jews saw, in the end they abandoned Jesus. People don't have faith when they experience miracles. Even if you experience the miracle of leaving a cult or experiencing the miracle of being healed of an illness, 90% of people do not come

to church. The Christian faith does not come from within man, but is given unilaterally from above. Paul said, "You have been saved by grace, by faith, not by your own power, but by the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8). John the Baptist also said, "Unless a man is given by heaven, he cannot receive anything" (John 3:27). Even those who were persecuting Christianity yesterday will suddenly change and become confessors of the Lord if they receive the Holy Spirit today. Paul testified of this firsthand. This is inconceivable from the perspective of human growth. We do not know when faith will come and when the Holy Spirit will come down. That's why Christianity is so interesting and so hopeful.

③ **【Secret of the Messiah】**

Jesus performed many great miracles, but they were done secretly in secluded places or in hidden places. Moreover, after the miracle, he strictly commands, "Don't tell anyone." It is called the "secret of the Messiah." He was not a revolutionary who turned the world upside down, nor was he a peace movement. I would have liked him to be more like a hero who openly confronts the evils of society and the evils of the state, but he didn't. He always lays hands on each sick person, speaks to the poor, communes with the lowly, listens carefully to what they have to say, and is very humble. The disciples and brothers felt a sense of bewilderment. That's why the brethren said, "Since you are doing this, you must show yourself clearly to the world" (v. 4). Jesus is in hiding until the time comes.

● In 1990, I was assigned to the Miyakojima Mission, and for seven years until 1997, I asked myself about the style of the chapel as it is now, "God, what should I do? Tell me. Give me a sign." I have been praying. In the seventh year, we renovated it so that it could be blown away, but we have been working in hiding so that the parish does not know about it as much as possible. Eventually, I began to participate in various gatherings, and it spread naturally, and it became known throughout the country through video distribution due to Corona. Then I was told, "The sermon is good, but if you don't have that worship," and other Christian denominations called me "idolatry," "fake," and "freak." But I still keep praying, "Tell me God's will." And without the Lord's permission, I don't think I will be able to achieve anything.

④ **【Live by seeking the will of God the Father】**

Even when the brothers were told to "show yourself clearly to the world," Jesus said, "My time has not yet come. But your time is always prepared. ... I will not go up to this festival. and for my time has not come." (verses 6 and 8), and he refused to go to Tokyo. Jesus placed great importance on "God's timing." The standard of Jesus' actions was always "the will of God the Father." He put God's

will first. No matter how many people agreed, no matter how much he was recommended by his relatives, Jesus would not move at all without a word from God. Just as when Israel was traveling in the wilderness, if the pillars of cloud, the pillars of fire, did not move, they would not have departed. There is a gap between what people think and what Jesus thinks.

Paul spoke to the Roman governor Felix about the Christian faith. "When Paul spoke of justice, temperance, and the coming judgment, Felix was frightened, and he was glad to go home this time. I said." (Acts 24:25). Justice is Christ, temperance is the Christian life, and the coming judgment is the future. Pastor Yasuro Enomoto said, "I think these three things are representative of our Christian faith. I think there is a tendency for Christianity to be preached as if it is only for this present moment." He said.

● In the 2nd century, Tertullian was born in Carthage, Africa, the son of a Roman centurion, and was educated in law, dialectics, and Greek classics, and went to Rome, where he became famous as a jurist. In 194, I was deeply moved by the sight of Christians being persecuted in the Roman amphitheatre and being executed by crucifixion, burning at the stake, and being preyed to by wild beasts. He was subsequently converted and became a Christian, writing Christian apologies and writing about his experiences at that time. "Whoever witnesses this amazing patience is seized with a certain anxiety, and cannot help but inquire into what has given them this patience, and as soon as they discover the truth, they follow it. ... It is because they know this truth that they can die as if they were returning to their homes."

When Tertullian saw the martyr, he was "overwhelmed with anxiety." When Governor Felix heard the word of God, he was "terrified." When Jesus was born, both King Herod and the people of Jerusalem were "anxious" (Matthew 2:3). Welcoming Jesus is about evoking anxiety in our lives. It is to give up the main role of the stage from me to Jesus. There were two ways to deal with this anxiety. One is a way of life that seeks to eliminate anxiety, and King Herod is the representative. The other is a way of living in anxiety, and the representative is Mary and the disciples. It's okay to be anxious. Despite our insecurities, we continue to commune with God. The power to obey God does not come out of man. The power to obey comes from God. We cannot obey God without the power of the Holy Spirit. When we read the lives of the martyrs, we see that they are all troubled and anxious, but as they commune with the Lord, they gradually become more and more transparent, and eventually the Lord transforms them into followers. So let's pray earnestly to the Lord, keep

fellowship, and seek the strength to obey.