

Sunday, October 13, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

「Way, Truth, Life」 Pastor Takaaki Inoue  
Hebrews 10:19~25, John 14:1~9

① [What does it mean to prepare a place in heaven?]

John 14~17 is Jesus' final farewell sermon. In chapter 13, Jesus said, "Where I go, you cannot come" (13:33), and He spoke of leaving His disciples and their betrayal. When the disciples heard this, they were filled with anxiety. So he said, "Don't let your heart be troubled, but believe in God. And believe me." (Ibid. 14:1), and so that they might be reassured, "There are many places to live in my father's house. I will go, and I will prepare a place for you, and I will come back and welcome you to Me. Thus where I am, you will also be." (Ibid. 14:2~3). The Father's house is heaven, the kingdom of God. That's where Jesus came from, and that's where he's going to go. For Jesus, death is nothing more than returning to his parents' home. People are anxious because they think that this world is real and heaven is a bonus. As Paul says, "Our home is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). In the same way, we have come to this world from heaven to work. Because they are migrants, they don't have complete peace. There is complete peace in our homeland. The other side is the home country, the real thing. Jesus said that He would return to his hometown first, and that He would come back when he had prepared a place for His disciples to live, welcome them into their home home, and that He would live with them forever. I didn't understand the meaning of this passage for a long time. "There are so many places to live in heaven, so why does Jesus have to prepare a place? That's what I thought. Interestingly, Augustine in the 4th century had the same question.

● The other day, during my morning prayer, Psalm 90 says, "Lord, you are our dwelling place from generation to generation" (90:1). The colloquial translation is "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations." Man dwells in God, and God Himself is heaven. To enter heaven is to enter God. Therefore, to prepare a place for man to live in heaven means to prepare it in God Himself. The fact that the Lord told this story before His crucifixion teaches us that Christ's death and resurrection are what the place will provide. In other words, Christ took away sin and death from human nature through His cross and resurrection, preparing man to live in God forever. In other words, Christ, the Bridegroom, washed and cleansed the bride of her filth in order to welcome her into his home. God became man. In Christ, God and man were united, became husband and wife, and became a family. Just as a wife goes to her husband's parents' house only after marriage, a person (believer) who is united with Christ becomes the one who is brought to his parents' house for the first

time, that is, to heaven. That's how I understand it here.

## ② [Christ is the way, truth, and life]

When Thomas asked, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way" (14:5), Jesus replied, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father without passing through me." (14:6). It's a famous quote. Since these three things belong to God, he called himself God. In fact, when Philip later says, "Show us the Father" (14:8), he says, "You have been with me for so long, and you do not know me, and he who has seen me has seen the Father." (14:9), showing that He and God the Father are one. This is not a case of rank, but of divinity. For the Father and the Son are different but identical in divinity. Jesus Himself is the only "living way" that connects with God the Father. Because man no longer knew the way back to God, He laid the way from heaven to earth, or rather, the way itself came. If you walk this "way" of Jesus, you will surely come to God the Father. We don't walk this path alone. We must travel this path in unity with Christ. So did the disciples. Like the traveler at Emmaus, when I got lost, Christ pulled me back. Christ, who dwells within, tells us, "Right and left." Also, Jesus Himself is the truth. Because he is God. Who else has the truth but God? To know Jesus is to know the truth. Jesus also referred to himself as "life." This is also another name for God. There is no life in this world. Life is Christ. "You study the Bible, thinking that there is eternal life in the Bible, but the Bible bears witness of me. And yet you do not come to me to get life." (John 5:38~40) No matter how much we study Christ, there is no point. Christ is the one who eats. (John 6:48~) Eating Jesus and becoming one becomes life.

## ③ [Christianity is the way]

One of the oldest names for Christianity was "the way." The book of Acts says: "In those days there was an easy tumult concerning this road" (Acts 19:23), and Felix, the Roman governor of Caesarea, "knew a great deal about this road" (Acts 24:22). Even if you read hundreds of books about Christianity, you will not have walked that path unless you enter it, start walking that path, and keep walking. There is a difference between knowing and walking. Japan people were well aware of this, and they mysteriously added the word "do" to everything, such as kendo, judo, tea ceremony, and flower arrangement. It's the same with Christianity. Some people mistakenly think that faith is about studying, but faith is a practice, an experience. The pastor of a certain church wrote Augustine's theory of the Trinity in his graduation thesis. I told him, "The Trinity is not something to be studied at a desk, but to be recited in prayer." I learned this in the prayers of the Orthodox monastic religion. God is not

something to be learned, but something to be worshipped. If you want to know Christ, you must immediately start by being baptized, reading the Bible, and praying.

●The Church Fathers are saying: "If you want to save yourselves and have eternal life, when you wake up in the morning, cut the sign of the cross, saying amen in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Faith is not gained by thinking, but by doing. Experience, not words or thoughts, teaches us about God. Fresh air does not enter the room unless the window is opened. As long as you don't sunbathe, your skin won't turn black. It is the same with gaining faith. Sitting comfortably and waiting is not enough to reach our goals. Let's imitate the prodigal son. He stood up and departed.

I read the book of Kings the other day. Which do you think is stronger, the power to destroy or the power to create? You might think it's a force to destroy, but it's a force of creation. Jerusalem was thoroughly destroyed by Babylon, but suddenly 70 years later, the people were liberated and the nation was restored. The Roman Empire also persecuted Christianity, but made it the state religion 300 years later. Christianity in Japan was also persecuted during the Pacific War, but its regime did not last long, and it was decided to gain religious freedom again. All the destroyers vanished, and the power to create remained. We can see this in our daily lives. It's fun when you're making something. It's fun when you're building a church or a house. Because creativity comes from God. On the other hand, when we are destroying (people, families, wars), we feel a tremendous emptiness during and after it. Because it is a power that comes from the devil. Jesus was resurrected on the third day even though his body was destroyed. It's the moment when creativity triumphs over destructive power. No matter what I did, it was in vain. You can't beat God. What comes from man will always disappear, but what comes from God will remain forever. Creativity lasts forever and lasts until the end. We must contend with the spirits of evil (demons and demons) and the destructive power they give to man. We have been called to bear witness to God to the world and to overcome the works of the devil. What we have to fear is not that the environment around us will get worse. It is to lose faith in the power of God's creation.

God has begun a new work of creation in us. It continues today. That's why God should be happy. God's creation never ends. According to Irenaeus in the second century, all people are united in Christ and become one person, and all things are gathered and reunited in Christ. This is how the world is completed. What a huge salvation! How delightful is this path with Christ! "The way of the follower of God is a shining light, and the more he goes, the more light increases, becoming the brightness of the noonday" (Proverbs 4:18).

I pray that you will not depart from this path, but that you will become more and more on this path.