

Sunday, November 10, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon
「What is the Foundation of the Temple?」 Pastor Takaaki Inoue
Ezra 3:10~13, John 2:13~21

① 【The foundation of religious life is to build altars and offer offerings】

Today I would like to talk about the book of Ezra in the Old Testament. The nation of Israel was destroyed by Babylon, but the nation of Persia destroyed Babylon. God moved the heart of King Cyrus of Persia and ordered the temple in Jerusalem to be rebuilt, allowing the people who wished to return home. In fact, it will be the first time in about 70 years that he has returned. They came back and each lived in their own city, but eventually they gathered in Jerusalem to build altars and make offerings. It means that we have started worshiping.

●I'm sure you've all heard the word "Reform." It refers to renovating a house, but now the word "renovation" is used instead of "renovation". It means "repair, repair". Rather, "reform" means "improvement, repair, reform," and "Reformation" is called "the reformation" in English. The word "reform" gives the impression of starting something new, but its original meaning is "returning to the original form." "Re = again, form = form", so it is to return to the original form. When I was in seminary, I was taught, "Go back to tradition." Tradition refers to the true nature of the church. The medieval Catholic Church had fallen out of that tradition, and Luther wanted to undo it. Uresley also sought to return to the traditions of the Church Fathers of the ancient Church. He read the prayer book and partook of the sacrament every day. The Reformation is the restoration of the church to its original form. What I'm doing may seem strange to people in the Protestant church, but I'm just back to tradition. What I am talking about is also the teachings of the Church Fathers and Fathers of old. I'm not talking about anything special. The foundation of religious life is the construction of altars and the offering of offerings. It consists in offering prayers and, ultimately, giving ourselves.

② 【I can shed tears because I know my sins】

Now, in February of the following year, they began to rebuild the temple. That's what I read today.

Many old priests, Levites, and patriarchs, who had seen the temple of old, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of the temple laid, and many cried with joy. The people could not distinguish between the cry of joy and the cry of the people. for the cry of the people was so loud that it resounded far and wide."

(Ezra 3:11~13)

When the foundation of the temple was laid, the cries and cries of many people

were mixed together, and it became a very loud cry that reverberated far and wide. Now our church wants to take over a religious corporation, get the land and buildings donated by the mother church, and make the chapel larger. It has not yet been decided whether to build on this land or on another new land, but when the foundation stone of the church is laid, will they cry out loud like the Israelites? Why did they cry? It is also written that people who had seen the old temple wept. They remembered the temple when it was beautiful and glorious. I still have that image in my mind. But now in front of you are rubble and ruins. Because of his sins, he lost his country, lost his land, was robbed of everything, and lived in slavery for 70 years in another country. People don't realize their sins unless they lose something. Without sacrifice, one cannot understand sin. I think that when they saw the temple in ruins, they clearly understood their sin. In spite of our sinful nature, God had mercy on us and gave us a chance to live again. I understood God's mercy and patience. That's why we cry. These tears are "tears of repentance." It's not just tears of joy. Simeon, the 11th-century neotheologian, said, "He who celebrates worship without tears, and receives the Eucharist without tears, is not qualified to celebrate worship or receive the Eucharist." It is said that in the 18th century, St. Tikhon of Zadonsk participated in the hourly prayers and almost always sang in the choir with tears.

● "Tears are God's gift to cleanse the heart. This is the living water of humility. ... The monks weep because they have lost the Holy Spirit because of their own laziness and sin. He also sees how much the Lord loved people, and weeps when he sees how stubborn he is and how little love he has for the Lord and his neighbor. ... True tears are those that flow without being aware of God's kindness and majesty when they come at us from all directions. ... Tears have the power to renew the grace you received at your baptism. ... The tears that the Holy Spirit gives us are sweet and quiet. ... When you leave the room, your face is so full of joy that no one thinks you have cried."
(From Words from Athos)

③ **[If there is no repentant and broken soul]**

This temple was completed in 517~518 BC (the 6th year of the reign of King Darius) and is called the "Second Temple". Five hundred years later, in 19 BC, Herod the Great carried out a large-scale expansion of the temple, which was completed in 70 AD. He spent 90 years building it. This work continued during Jesus' lifetime. However, the year after its completion, the Roman army besieged Jerusalem and completely destroyed it. Why is this temple being built and destroyed, and why is it being built and destroyed? This is because no matter how splendidly the building was built, the hearts of the people who

gathered there were not worthy of it. This is because the people who came back from Babylon were full of repentance and gratitude, but eventually they forgot their hearts of gratitude and forgot their soul of repentance and became arrogant.

Does heaven make everyone feel happy just by entering it? Probably not. The workers who worked in the morning complained to their masters when they saw that the workers who had worked in the evening were treated in the same way as they were and received the same wages. A man who was invited to the prince's wedding banquet was not happy to wear his ceremonial clothes. The Lord Jesus clearly said that there are people who will not be happy when they go to heaven, and there will be people who will complain. And they couldn't be in heaven. As Paul says, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy given by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). If you don't get the Holy Spirit, you won't be able to rejoice when you go to heaven. The Holy Spirit brings peace and joy. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot feel it. Our life consists in preparing souls worthy of heaven. That's what it means to prepare oil along with a lamp. No matter how new and large the church is, if you don't struggle with it, the joy will be diminished. "Oh, the pastor and the zealous people are working hard, it doesn't matter to me. Can you rejoice in the thought that the church was formed without knowing it? It's the same with Easter. Why do we need 50 days of prayer, monasticism and fasting? You entered Lent without knowing it, Easter was coming without you knowing, so how could you shed tears of emotion? Before you know it, your whole life will be over before you know it. Both Paul and Luther suffered from their sins. Because I was suffering, I felt grateful for the gospel of Jesus, who freed me from it.

A monk wrote: "If you stand on the hill of Golgotha, or if you stand in the kingdom of God, you will not be moved unless you have a repentant and broken soul."

I would like to pray to God to give me more gifts of tears so that I can know more about my sins and understand His grace.