

Sunday, November 24, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

「Waiting for Fruit」 Pastor Takaaki Inoue

James 5:7~11, Matthew 13:18~23

### ① 【About patience】

The Epistle of James was written by someone who borrowed the name of James (brother of Jesus), the first bishop of the Jerusalem church, and is an authoritative book in the Eastern Orthodox Church after the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. In this epistle, Jacob repeatedly talks about patience. "Be patient, and you will be perfect, perfect, and lacking in nothing." (1:4) In chapter 5, which we read today, we are commanded, "Patience until, unto the Lord's coming" (5:7). Patience is very important to the Christian faith in order to become a fruitful.

● You've probably heard the term customer harassment before. It refers to nuisance behavior such as abusive language and unreasonable demands from customers. In the old days, there was no such thing. Not only that, but there is something wrong with Japan society as a whole, such as excessive slander on the Internet and complaints from parents against teachers. Takeshi Yoro, professor emeritus at the University of Tokyo, says that Japan people have lost patience these days, and people who are uncontrollable make up the mainstream of society. "About 10 years ago, there was a person who was doing research on children's patience, and he showed them his computer screen and said, 'If something like this happens, press the button. If you tell children not to press the button in such a case, they will want to press the button, so it is easy to make a mistake in the answer when they should not press it. As a result, the percentage of mistakes made by 6th graders and 2nd graders at the time was about the same. In short, I was impressed by the conclusion that even though I am a 6th grader, I can only have the patience of a 2nd grader.'

It took five years to acquire a religious corporation. I went to the Osaka Prefectural Office more than 10 times. Many times, the board of directors discussed the rules of the religious corporation and created them, but the denomination told me to make them conform to the rules of the denomination headquarters, so I changed them. When I called the prefectural office before finally submitting it, I was told that it had to be a registered seal of the cult, and since it was a square seal, I sent the document back to the sect headquarters to get a registered seal. When it came time to submit the work tomorrow, the staff of the parish office took a day off due to a cold, and it was extended for a week. When it was finally time to submit, the denomination told me that I had not yet received one of the necessary documents, so I hurriedly submitted them. It took a lot of stops. At this point, I don't get angry anymore. I was like, "I'm going to

be okay with whatever happens, I'm going to wait forever and I'm going to hold on until I can." I was trained to "persevere" in the persuasion of cult religion and in church life and in the acquisition of religious corporations. The life of faith is one word: patience. Patience is learned.

## ② **[In order to bear fruit, it is necessary twice, spring rain and autumn rain]**

James compares the life of a Christian to that of a farmer. "Patience until the Lord comes, and the farmer waits patiently for the precious fruits of the earth until the autumn rain and the spring rain fall. Be patient. Keep your hearts firm." (5:7~8) In Palestine, we sow seeds in the fields and wait for the autumn rains in October~November. When it rains, sprouts appear and begin to grow. Furthermore, when spring rains fall in April ~ May, the fruits ripen and can be harvested. In this way, we had to wait for two rains from heaven. The same is true of the life of faith. Even if you make a confession of faith through the work of the Holy Spirit and your faith sprouts, it will not bear fruit unless you receive the rain of the Holy Spirit many times. The 12 apostles also received the Holy Spirit many times. John 20:22 "Breathe upon them, saying, Receive the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:4 "They were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in the languages of other nations as the Spirit made them speak," and Acts 4:31 "When the prayer was over, the place where they had gathered shook and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak boldly the word of God." There are many pentecosts. There are also many words about "fruit" in the Bible. "Beware of false prophets. You shall recognize them by their fruit. ... All good trees bear good fruit, and bad trees bear bad fruit." (Matthew 7:16, 17) The fruit in this case is "words and deeds." When the rain of the Holy Spirit falls on us, it bears fruit that can be called character. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance" (Galatians 5:22~23). This is due to the work of the Spirit of the Lord." (II Corinthians 3:18), so the fruit of Christlikeness will come to fruition.

## ③ **[Balance between labor and grace is necessary for harvesting]**

● "The new life we were about to start was often likened to that of a farmer. The soil and seeds that are plowed, as well as the heat of the sun, the rain, and the power to grow vegetables, are all gifts of God. However, the labor is left to the farmer. A farmer must weed, plow, water, and mow from early morning until late at night in order to hope for a good harvest. The farmer must always work, always be awake, always be vigilant, and always be ready to take action. But in the end, the harvest depends on the weather and climate, that is, God. The field we cultivate is our own heart. The harvest is eternal life. "

From "The Way of the Pilgrims"

In order to reap the harvest, we need "two things: the grace of God and the labor of man." Lacking either of them will not produce good fruit. Psalm 65:11 says, "For he blesses that which sprouts." Just sprouts do not bear fruit. When God's blessing is added to it, the things of the earth bear fruit. We need a "balance between God's grace and human labor." No matter how much rain falls from the heavens, if you don't plant the seeds, how will they sprout? Labor is God's command. Our labor is to continue reading the Bible, to cultivate our hearts, and to live a life of faith to keep talking. In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of the necessity of continuing to sow the seed that is the word of God, no matter what the state of mind of the person who hears the word of God is. The seeds on the roadside, the seeds on the stones, and the seeds that fell in the thorns were all wasted. In fact, 75% of it is wasted. No matter how much you read, how much you pray, no matter how much good sermon you listen to, 75% of it is wasted. But when our hearts are cultivated by the trials of life, one word of God sprouts and multiplies dozens of times and bears fruit. You bet on it. Do not be afraid that 75% will be wasted. That's what I think. I have been praying for 43 years for one wish, but it still cannot be granted. However, I believe that it will bear fruit when the time comes. We do everything we can and wait for God's Holy Spirit. Only those who have done what they need to do will come to truly expect from God and will eventually reap a bountiful harvest.

●Saburo Uragami, the uncle of Pastor Yuji Uragami, the former pastor of the Osaka Higashi Juzo Church, initially expressed his rejection of Christianity. However, I was invited to a night-long missionary meeting, and on the last day of the meeting, I went out and became a Christian with a dramatic conversion in one night. After that, he entered the seminary with the intention of becoming a pastor, but in the middle of his studies, he gave up being a pastor because of a blood nucleus and subsequently a caries. I returned to my parents' home in Ehime Prefecture to recuperate and take care of my elderly father. The eldest son and his wife lived next door. After a while, the eldest daughter of the eldest couple died of tuberculosis. The eldest son's daughter-in-law believed that her daughter's illness was caused by the tuberculosis of her brother-in-law, Saburo, and began to treat her coldly by putting it on something. From this time on, Uncle Saburo began to pray for the salvation of his brother-in-law. In the end, my brother-in-law was baptized five years after Uncle Saburo was called. It had been 45 years since I started praying. Eventually, time passed, and before my aunt, who hated Uncle Saburo so much, was called, Pastor Uragami went to visit him and said, "Thank you..." Yes. Tears rolled down the teacher's cheeks as she realized that her aunt had forgiven him.

God's Word is alive and grows in man over the years and bears fruit. God is faithful. Our labor will never be in vain. That's why we must be patient and keep praying, keep listening to God's words, keep talking, and keep waiting.