

Sunday, December 8, 2024 Advent Sunday Morning Worship Sermon
「Annunciation」 Pastor Takaaki Inoue
Isaiah 7:10~14, Luke 1:26~38

❶ 【What is the traditional theory of Maria】

The angel Gabriel came to the Virgin Mary in the city of Nazareth and said: "Congratulations, blessed one, the Lord is with you." (Luke 1:28) When Mary heard this greeting, she was confused and pondered. Then Gabriel said, "Mary, do not be afraid, you have received grace from God. Thou shalt conceive and give birth to a son, and thou shalt name him Jesus." (verse 31). Maria was only about 15 years old at the time. Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but she was not yet married, so when she said, "How can that be, I do not know a man?" Gabriel replied, "The Holy Spirit (the Spirit of God) will descend upon you, and the power of the Most High (God) will envelop you. Therefore the child who is born will be called holy, the son of God." (1:35).

Man needed salvation, while God needed a body to live and die with man. Infant Mary provided the body for it. For the first time in her, God and man became one, and Jesus was born. Regarding this "virgin birth," it would be heresy to say that Mary gave birth to an ordinary human child, and that the Spirit of God later dwelt in that child and became Christ. Mary did not give birth to a mere human being. It was God who dwelt in Mary's womb. It is the belief of the Church that in Mary's womb, God and man became one and gave birth to Christ. Therefore, the Council of Ephesus in 431 gave Mary the title of "Mother of God" (Theotokos), and the Council of Chalcedon in 451 summarized the birth of Christ as follows. "Born of the Holy Father before all the worlds, according to divine nature, and of the virgin Mary, the Mother of God (Theotochus), at the end of the world, for us and for our salvation according to humanity." After this, the Catholic Church has adopted the following statements: "Mary has no original sin (Immaculate Conception)", "Mary is an eternal virgin", "Mary ascended to heaven with body and soul (Assumption)", "She is the mediator of prayer", " She is the Mother of the Church." The Orthodox Church does not recognize the Immaculate Conception of Mary, but believes in the rest of the teachings. We Protestants have never heard of such a teaching, so it is difficult for us to get it. All we know is that Mary is not to be worshipped, but to be respected.

❷ 【May it be as you say】

In response to Gabriel's message, Mary immediately offered herself, saying, "I am the Lord's servant, and I may be as He says" (verse 38). Dedication. When Mary accepted God's word, Christ, the Son of God, was born in her. What

happened to Mary is to all people. When we also believe and accept God's Word, Christ is spiritually born in us through the work of the Holy Spirit. But dedication is not easy. God's will is sometimes harsh. They say things that make them want to throw up and things they don't want to follow. So these words of Mary smell of the cross. In fact, Mary would later suffer the harsh fate of becoming the mother of the Savior. In Nazareth, I was told that I was an illegitimate child, and I was looked at with white eyes, and one thing after another happened that I could not understand. And the last is the crucifixion of the beloved son. You will feel as if your heart is being torn by a sword. My image of Mary is not that of a beautiful and pure Virgin, but of a patient and silent Mother. I think he was a person who had sorrows and sufferings that he could not tell anyone, and who kept them in his heart and contemplated them, and continued to obey them.

● Sister Kazuko Watanabe said, "When I was young, I had the courage to take on new challenges and achieve something, but as I get older, I am taught that I need to have the courage to accept the unacceptable." But that's what dedication is all about.

③ **【Christ is formed in man by suffering】**

"Did Luther revere Mary?" I read a book titled: Luther seems to have respected Mary throughout his life. He used it as a model for the Christian life. This is what I wrote.

● "Mary is adorned with the roses of the three virtues, faith, humility, and modesty," and "the holy virgin walks a long way on foot from great humility to old Elisabeth." "When Mary was in Nazareth, she was a lonely, poor young woman, and no one paid attention to her, ... No one wants to feel the great miracle she has received. She is also silent about it, considering herself an insignificant person in the city. ... Think of how she was despised in the inns along the way."

Psalm 90 is subtitled "Prayer, a Poem of Moses, a Man of God" and is often used at funerals. That's because verse 3 says, "Thou shalt turn man back to dust, and thou shalt return, O Son of man" (v. 3). Moses undertook the great task of delivering the Israelites out of Egypt and leading them to the Promised Land. But he struck the rock in anger and did not enter the promised land. There he quietly climbs Mount Nebo and disappears. When God says, "Son of man, go home," then people must leave, even if they are in the middle of their work. What about Mary, who became the mother of Jesus? One day, the fate of becoming the mother of the Messiah suddenly entered my life. And her whole life was a series of sufferings. What about the couple Zachariah and Elisabeth?

It is given to you when you are young, even though you wish for a child, and it is given to you when you are old and lose the physical strength to raise a child. This is true of all those who are made to do the work of salvation, and who are made to do the work of God. God is the protagonist of the stage, and all human beings are supporting characters. However, the lives of those who have served God in this way are all filled with the glory of God.

●A woman with a husband with a personality disorder and domestic violence came to a study session on mental illness. It was a hellish life, but her husband eventually died. She said, "After studying about my illness, I used to think that my husband was all bad, but now I know that I was also bad, and now I forgive him. However, the children grew up watching her husband's domestic violence and did not forgive him. I still have homework to do for the rest of my life, which is to teach my children to forgive others." I was told. In addition, the other day there was a meeting to hear from people who are withdrawn. A young man in his 30s was taken in by his mother after his parents divorced when he was young. My mother remarried, but she always became the bad guy to protect her sister because of domestic violence. However, the domestic violence is so severe that I run to the police box and enter a children's home. He didn't know the warmth and love of such a person, but he began to go to church, and he was accepted and loved. What these two people have in common is that people who have experienced great suffering have abundance. The suffering does not end there, and the kindness and resilience are evident in their faces. He has a good face, like a "monk".

When I see them silently bearing the cross that God has made them bear, trying to live righteously, loving others, and forgiving others, no matter how unreasonable, I feel as if I am looking at Christ. It is the mystery of suffering. Mary conceived Christ in her womb, but even after giving birth, there was no Christ in her body, but I think that the inner Christ grew larger and larger through faith and obedience. We would like to seek the Lord's will and continue to follow it.