

December 29, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon
"Herod and Christ" Pastor Takaaki Inoue
Hosea 11:1~9, Matthew 2:13~15, 19~23

❶ 【Let's have a new Exodus with Christ】

As soon as Jesus is born, King Herod tries to kill Jesus. This man named Herod was a very suspicious man, and he killed one person after another who tried to threaten his throne. The angel tells Joseph in a dream. "Arise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to find him and kill him." (Matthew 2:13) Then Joseph awoke and took them with him in the night and fled to Egypt. Matthew interpreted this flight to Egypt as a prophecy. "That what the Lord had said through the prophets, 'I have called my son out of Egypt,' may come to pass" (v. 15) This prophecy is found in Hosea 11:1 in the Old Testament. Among the teachers of Judaism, it was believed that the Messiah would suffer a fate similar to that of Moses. Herod's slaughter of all boys under the age of two is similar to the Egyptian pharaoh's command to "bury every born boy into the Nile" (Exodus 1:22), and the angel's words to Joseph, who was taking refuge in Egypt, "Those who sought the life of this child have died" (Matthew 2:20), and the Lord's words to Moses, who was taking refuge in Midian, "Come, Return to Egypt, for all those who sought your life have died" (Exodus 4:19). It is clear that the life of Jesus and the life of Moses are superimposed. In other words, this story is the "New Exodus" by Jesus. Jesus is the new leader who will lead the people, and Joseph and Mary traveling with Jesus are depicted as the new Israel. By repeating the history of Israel in this way, we are restoring the disobedience of the old Israelites.

●When I said the "Morning Prayer" on Friday the 27th, I was relieved and calm. The house where the master returned will be orderly. Through prayer, God's master came into my heart. Prayer is the most effective way to separate us from this world and bring us into the kingdom of God. Those who pray can leave the world.

The reason why the Bible speaks of the Exodus and Exodus and Exodus Babylon so many times is that the life of faith is a "journey out of this world" with Jesus toward the promised land of heaven.

❷ 【Arise again and again to keep Christ alive】

The story of Herod's persecution is trying to teach us that even when faith is born, there are demonic forces at work that want to kill that faith. Herod lives among you. They try to stop you from going to church, reading the Bible, and

praying. If you don't, your faith will die. But at the same time, the story tells us that there were people who desperately tried to protect Jesus. They are Joseph and his mother Mary. Learn how Joseph protected Jesus. The word "get up" appears here as many as four times. "Arise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt" (v. 13), "Joseph arose and went away into Egypt with the child and his mother in the night" (v. 14), "Arise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel" (v. 20), "And Joseph arose ... He returned to the land of Israel" (v. 21). He shows no hesitation in telling the dream. The only time I was lost was the first time Mary was conceived. From then on, he believes in the prophecies of his dreams and acts immediately. "Wake up" symbolizes faith, hope, and resurrection. "Sleep" is death, symbolizing laziness and despair.

●A monk consulted with the abbot. "I have sinned," the abbot said to him. "Be converted and stand up." The monk asks. "What shall I do if I sin again?" the abbot says to him. "Rise up again," the monk asks. "What shall I do if I still sin?" the abbot says to him. "Rise up again and again, fall and get up, fall and get up, and do it all your life."

Whenever I visit Pastor Hirakata at a nursing home, She always read the Book of Faith. Even at the age of 97, She don't stop learning. The teacher eats well. Those who eat are fine. It's the same with faith. No matter how old you are, those who read the Bible and pray are spiritually energetic.

●Augustine of Hippo in the 4th century said: "You don't have to be afraid of imperfections. I'm not saying that you don't have to be afraid of imperfection, but that you should love imperfection. Be as you are. As long as there is imperfection in it, move forward. Day by day, and day by day, and do not depart from the body of the Lord."

Faith is a decision. It is to decide not to stop treatment until you are cured. Keep reading, worshiping, and praying until Christ grows in you.

③ [Evil will surely perish, only good remains]

When Jesus, His only begotten Son, was persecuted, God the Father did not immediately lay down His hand to destroy Herod. Jesus is running around trying to get killed. I wonder why Jesus is so weak. It is still the same, and the Church seems helpless before the powers of this world, the power of plague, and the forces of evil. I wonder why God doesn't destroy evil promptly. I think it is because He is testing our faith. If you read here, you will find words such as "fleeing," "staying" (verse 13), "leaving" (verse 14), and "withdrawing" (verse 22).

Faith is not just about moving forward. It's okay to run away, withdraw, and stay until the time comes. Joseph was imprisoned for two years, Moses retired to Midiane for 40 years, and Paul retired to Arabia for three years. I think it's important to know how to spend this time of escape and withdrawal. Take a close look at the Bible. "He was there until he died" (v.15), "When Herod died" (v.19), "Those who sought his life died" (v.20), and "He died, he died, he died." Herod is sure to die. Those who oppose God will surely perish. It is also written, "Lord, whoever is against you will surely perish" (Psalm 92:10). Through these stories, God tells us that evil will self-destruct, so leave it alone. It teaches us that no matter how strong the forces of evil may seem, we should not be afraid. Because evil is not a being, but a state of lack of goodness. God created good, but not evil. Only what comes from God remains. Thirty-three years later, people killed Christ on the cross, put Him in a tomb, sealed Him, and resurrected Him on the third day. No matter what I did, it was in vain. No one can beat him. There is no way that man can prevail against God. Such a person lives in you, and you have His life. The enemy can't do anything to me. So don't be afraid.

●Michi Kawai is the founder of Keisen Jogakuin, and he says this. "Christ was crucified on Friday, and the next day he lay in the tomb and nothing happened, and his enemies laughed at him. But there was a third day when he rose from the dead. There are days in this world when it seems as if nothing has been accomplished, and we Christians tend to think that we were crucified, died, and buried. Perhaps these days are just like that. But we believe that we have been given a third day. I believe that this third day is reserved for me and even for my work."

Rather than striving to rid the world of "evil," it is to cultivate faith that trusts Christ absolutely. It is impossible to get rid of evil. It is to know that it is okay to have evil, that God is stronger, that goodness is stronger, and that life is stronger. If the forces of evil seem great, you will be dominated by anxiety. But if the power of Christ seems great, you will be in peace. Think only of growing the Christ in you. Therein lies the secret of peace.