

January 5, 2025    Sunday Morning Worship Sermon  
"Embracing Life"    Pastor Takaaki Inoue  
Psalm 92:10~16, Luke 2:22~38

**① 【What does it mean to wait for salvation?】**

Jesus was taken to the temple for the first time 40 days after His birth. This is to perform a cleansing ceremony for Mary after giving birth, and to offer the infant Jesus to God. At that time, there was a man named Simeon in Jerusalem. Simeon was a righteous man, full of faith, and he longed for Israel to be comforted, and the Holy Spirit dwelled in him. He had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would never die until he met the Messiah. (Verses 25~26)

Simeon longed for Israel's salvation. As it says, "My soul waits on the Lord" (Psalm 130:6), "Waiting on God" is a theme throughout the Bible. "Those who wait" This is the hallmark of Israel. But not all of the Israelites were waiting for God. Many people have stopped "waiting." To be precise, I think it means that I was waiting for salvation, but I came to seek not from God, but from this world, from those who have the power of this world. But Simeon and the others were a minority who waited on God, the rest of Israel. It was prophesied. "I will leave among you a people who are meek and humble, and they will take refuge in the name of the Lord. The rest of Israel will not do unrighteousness, and they will not lie to you." (Zephaniah 3:12~13 KJK) Every time I read this, I wonder what salvation was for Simeon. What does salvation mean to you? I think this is a very important question. This is because even Christians have different ideas about salvation.

● There is a book called "One God or Thirty-One Gods" (A Dialogue between Judaism and Christianity). It is a book in which the Jewish teacher Lapidé and the Christian theologian Moltmann have a dialogue, and we can see how the Jews think about Jesus Christ. Lapidé says that Christ Jesus is one of many Messiahs, and that he is the "Messiah for foreigners" who came to teach God to foreigners. They say they don't need Him because they already know God. Lapidé says that the Messiah is a man, and he cannot understand that he is "the only begotten Son of God." They also say that they cannot believe in the resurrection of Christ as the beginning of salvation. This is because "no sign of heaven can be discovered." He says: "In your heart is the King, and in our heart is the Kingdom, and in your heart is the Savior, but in our heart is salvation itself." "What matters to us is salvation itself, and the question of who will carry it out... It's secondary."

How is this. I think you can see the salvation of the Jews. The salvation of the Jews is the visible establishment of heaven (the rebuilding of the Jewish

kingdom) on earth, and that is salvation. The person who does this is the Messiah. It is completely different from the salvation of Christianity. For us, the kingdom of heaven is not visible to us, but is created in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and we do not believe in what we can see, but in Jesus Christ and His work. Therefore, when I die, even though heaven has not yet appeared on earth, I already believe that my death is salvation because Christ will destroy me and eternal life will be set aside. We are to have Jesus Christ, "the only begotten Son, King and Savior of God," as Lapide says. What about you? Has anyone become a Jew? I don't think the salvation Simeon was looking for was heaven on earth. He said clearly. "For I have seen your salvation with my own eyes."

### **② [The Holy Spirit leads us to Christ]**

Simeon and Anna never met Jesus. There were so many people in the temple, so how did they know Jesus was their Savior? It is because the Holy Spirit has taught us. Until verses 25~27, the word "Holy Spirit" appears three times: "the Holy Spirit abides in him," "he receives from the Holy Spirit," and "he is led by the Spirit." Iron and magnets have the same properties, so they attract each other. In the same way, the Holy Spirit and Jesus are one and equal God, so they draw on each other, teach each other, and remain above what is the same as themselves. Man cannot know God. Only God knows Him. We know the same things by the same things. Therefore, those who have the Holy Spirit will be able to understand His Son, Jesus. The Holy Spirit is not something that you can receive once and never have to receive it again. The Holy Spirit will leave if we don't ask for it. You've probably heard the parable of the ten maidens. All 10 of them had lamps, but only 5 of them had oil. If there is no oil, the light will go out. Only the five wise maidens who were ready for oil were allowed into the palace. The lamp is faith, and the oil is the Holy Spirit. Faith is free, but the Holy Spirit must be prepared by us. I believe that only those who have the Holy Spirit can believe in Christ. Without the Holy Spirit, wouldn't people seek salvation in the things of this world that are not Christ? In order to maintain our faith, we must live a life of faith, seeking the Holy Spirit, praying, and reading God's Word every day. The prophetess Anna did not leave the temple, but prayed, served God night and day. That is why we were led to Christ.

### **③ [The Secret to Peace ~Embracing Christ~]**

When he was led by the Holy Spirit into the temple grounds, his parents brought Jesus there. Simeon immediately recognized the infant as the Messiah, took Jesus in his arms, and praised God. "Lord, now is the time for you to let this servant depart in peace, as you say, for I have seen your salvation with my own eyes. This is the salvation which He has prepared for all nations, the light of revelation that shines upon the Gentiles, the honor of your people Israel."

(Luke 2:29~32) This is called Nunku Dimitis, and it has come to be sung in the evening service. The evening routine is prayer before going to bed. He said, "I can now leave (die) this world in peace."

● Michiko Inukai, a Christian literary scholar, studied abroad in the United States. She contracted severe tuberculosis and was placed in a tuberculosis sanatorium in southern California. One day, one of the sisters brought me a small booklet, saying, "It has some good things written about it." But I had dozens of good books stacked at my bedside, so I didn't feel like picking up the booklet, but as soon as I turned the pages so as not to waste my sister's favor, I was immediately captivated by the text. It was written by a man named J. I immediately wrote to him, and he sent me a typed reply. At the end of the letter was J's signature, and that was the letter that trembled terribly. After that, I started a correspondence with J, and at Christmas, a priest came to visit me at J's request. He asked, "Do you know J?" J is severely handicapped with infantile paralysis and cannot move his limbs or neck except for his mouth. He told me that he was a young man with no relatives and no money who had spent more than 20 years in an institution while enduring the intense pain of heart attacks that often struck him. "He is a man who uses his heart and strength to sow joy in those around him," the priest said. The people who work at the facility bring in money, make a booklet of his words, and send it to prisons, facilities for the disabled, and hospitals free of charge. He put a pen in his mouth and signed, and his handwriting was shaking. Inukai writes: "I felt Christ in his friendship. Shortly after the loss of communication, I... I received a card with an icon holy painting. ... The painting was a portrait of the victorious Christ, on the reverse of which was written: "My grace is sufficient for you." I shed tears, but strangely I was not sad. Just grateful. Praised. I was moved by how people can live so beautifully and strongly when they live in the love of Christ. And I was grateful that I was sick. If I hadn't fallen, I wouldn't have been able to get to J."

J was severely handicapped, but there was an overflow of joy and freedom in his heart. The love of Christ enriched him. This is heaven. It is something that Jews who seek salvation on earth do not have. The old man Simeon held the infant Jesus in his hands. Now death embraces eternal life, and death has been grafted onto life again and brought back to life. Those who believe in Christ can be filled with joy in this way, even when they are old. The world changes, but there is no greater joy and peace than living in connection with eternity.

This year, let's continue to live with Christ firmly in our hearts.