

January 12, 2025 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon
"You come to me" Pastor Takaaki Inoue
Romans 6:1~5, Matthew 3:10~17

① 【The problem of sin living in us】

Today is the baptism of Jesus, and we will hold the baptism ceremony of Lucy. I think many people think of baptism as a ceremony in which a person decides to quit doing bad things, changes his mind, and becomes a good person. After the war, there were many people who were baptized with this in mind, but it was a human work and it was more like "rehabilitation." Baptism is not "rehabilitation" but "rebirth." Rehabilitation is to be reborn in this world, but rebirth is to die in this world and a new self is born in the old self. Rehabilitation is the work of man, but regeneration is the work of God's creation. Because it is the work of God, it is called a sacrament.

Christianity considers sin deeply. Many people in the world say, "I have never committed a crime." However, even if it is not a public crime, it is possible to hurt someone's feelings by speaking ill of someone, scolding a subordinate severely, scolding a child too much, or slander on the Internet. It just so happens that the people around us didn't die, and if you commit suicide, you're a criminal.

●When my child was still small, I used to slap my daughter's buttocks with chopsticks and 叱 them. I don't even remember what I hit it with. I guess I just didn't have the right place for the bugs. I was angry about it. I didn't have the patience to do it. If he had fallen down and the chopsticks had stuck in his throat, I would have killed my own child. No matter how many times you apologize, you can't go back. Children forgive their parents, but if they hurt others, they have to make amends for the rest of their lives. It is a sin to not be able to control anger and to hurt others.

When I was in college, I went to a cult religion called the Unification Association. The reason why I went there is that when I was a child, I was playing around in the fields without worrying about tomorrow, and I was happy to accept and be satisfied with whatever clothes and food my parents gave me, but as I grew older, I could not be satisfied with anything I had, and my heart was filled with various complaints. I wanted to go back to my childhood self. So I went to the cult without knowing anything. I thought I could change. If a person were content with what he was given and was always grateful, there would be no divorce and no war. Therefore, an unsatisfied heart is also a sin.

There are many roots of sin lurking within me, just by hiding. Some people will reopen themselves to the idea that that's what it means to be human. But I don't

think so. I believe that the human beings created by God are more beautiful. I don't know when this evil was born in me. However, even if it is not at birth, it will always be born in everyone's heart as it grows. This is called sin. Origen in the 2nd century wrote, "Children are innocent when they are born, but they are always taught by their parents and society, and no one can escape from them." I said. In Christianity, it is called "original sin" to say that all people must sin. I tried many times to get rid of the root of this sin, but I couldn't do anything about it. Jesus told a Jewish teacher named Nicodemus, "Unless anyone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). To be born of water and the Spirit (Holy Spirit) is baptism. No matter how well trained, respectable religious scholars, or great people are, they cannot enter heaven with human power, magnificence, and purity. It's the same with babies. That's why we get baptized.

② 【A new person is born through baptism prepared by God】

Now John is surprised to see Jesus appear in front of him, and he refuses to baptize him. "I should have been baptized by you, but you have come to me" (Matthew 3:14). Jesus replied to John: "Don't stop now, it's right for us to do all the right things." (Matthew 3:15) Notice the words the Lord said, "worthy of us." It means that Jesus became a sinner even though He was sinless. Jesus didn't need to be baptized, but He dared to be baptized for our own sake, not for Him. Stains on clothes are transferred into the water by coming into contact with the water. In the same way, when we become one with Christ, the sinless Son of God, my sins are passed on to Him. That's why he needed to be baptized with us humans. Therefore, a baptism ceremony is a ceremony to become one with Christ, and it can be called a wedding. John said that a new "baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire" (3:11) would begin, different from the "baptism of repentance with water" (3:11) that he was doing. Baptism was originally a Jewish initiation ceremony, but Jesus changed it into something new through His own experience. In other words, He buried the old man with water, and at the same time changed it into a ritual to create a new man with the Holy Spirit and fire (the Word).

● Cyril of Jerusalem preached to the baptismal candidates in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 348. "He was bathed three times and then came out of the water, which implied the three-day burial of Christ. That water of salvation was your grave and your mother's womb."

Pouring water on his head three times represents Christ's three-day burial, and rising out of the water represents his resurrection. Through baptism, the old self is buried in the water, and at the same time, a new person united to Christ is

born in the old man. Paul also said, "The important thing is to be created again" (Galatians 6:15). When you see Lucy's baptism, remember that you too have a new mystical body within you that is united to Christ. How humble is the baptism of a child! The child is left to be done. Passive. This is the true nature of man. Now Lucy is one with Christ, buried in the water, and a new life of unity with Christ is born in her. Let us give thanks for the mystery of death and rebirth through the water and the Holy Spirit.