

January 19, 2025    Sunday Morning Worship Sermon  
" The Temptation of the Wilderness "    Pastor Takaaki Inoue  
Genesis 3:1~7, Luke 4:1~13

### ❶ 【Drawn by the Holy Spirit】

Jesus, who was baptized, was full of the Holy Spirit and returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit through the wilderness and tempted by the devil for 40 days. The word "spirit" here refers to the "Holy Spirit," which means that God led Jesus around. To turn around is to take them by force. The state of being filled with the Holy Spirit is not to do everything according to one's own will, but to be forced to do things that do not go one's way, to go where one does not want to live, to take a circuitous path, and to obey obediently.

### ❷ 【Three temptations】

When Jesus fasted for 40 days and became hungry, the devil said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, why don't you command this stone to become bread?" Jesus replied, "Man does not live by bread alone" (Luke 4:4). He replied that man lives not only by bread, but also by God. You are being asked whether you want to live by your own strength or by God. The second temptation is the temptation of wealth and power. The devil showed Jesus the nations of the world and said, "I will give you all the power and prosperity of these nations. If you worship me, they will all be yours." (Ibid. 4:7). The idea is to join hands with evil, to compromise with evil, and you will gain wealth and power. Jesus says, "Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only" (4:8). The third temptation is to test God. The devil stands Jesus on the edge of the roof of the temple and says, "If you are the Son of God, why don't you jump down" (4:9), because the Bible says, "God will support you so that your feet do not hit the stones." But Jesus replied, "Do not test the Lord." The devil also uses the words of the Bible (the Psalms) to try to control God as he pleases. These temptations are, in the end, temptations to separate man from God and make him a god-like being. The first Adam was also tempted by the words, "I can be like God."

### ❸ 【Temptation to gain power】

It can be said that this temptation of the devil is not a weak messiah, but a temptation to become a strong messiah. It is a temptation to be a strong Messiah who can perform miracles, solve food problems, and obtain the things of the whole world. It is a temptation to power. Henri Nouwen writes in his book *The Path to True Power*:

●"When God sees this earth, He sheds tears, because His thirst for power has taken hold of people's hearts and is eating away at their spirits. There is more

resentment than gratitude, more criticism than praise, more revenge than forgiveness, more hurt than healing, more competition than mercy, more violence than cooperation, more unfathomable fear than love." "But there is something more pernicious than economic and political power, and that is religious power. When God sees this world, He not only sheds tears, but He also feels anger. For many of those who pray to God, give praise, and cry out to Him, 'Lord, Lord,' are also corrupted by force. God angrily said: "This people approach Me with their mouths, and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me, and if they fear and honor Me, it is because they have learned the commandments of men." (Isaiah 29:13)"

● Have you ever heard of the term "Christian Zionism"? The Jews were scattered all over the world, but in 1948 the State of Israel was founded. In the background, there was the Christian Zionist movement (a movement to build a Jewish nation). The idea is that Palestine is a land promised to Israel, that the indigenous Palestinians are evil, and that it is God's will to drive them out. In the 19th century, John Darby divided the history of the world into seven stages: (1) before the Fall, (2) the age of conscience (Adam ~ Noah), (3) the age of human dominion (Noah ~ Abraham), (4) the age of promise (Abraham ~ Moses), (5) the age of the law (Moses ~ Christ), (6) the age of grace and the church (apostles ~ the Last Judgment), and (7) the age of the kingdom of God (the second coming of Christ ~ the millennial kingdom). American evangelicals believe this and support Israel. The reason why I support it is because I believe that if the Jews are returned to the Holy Land and the country is built, the final world war will occur, and Christ will return and the kingdom of God will be established. In 2018, the U.S. embassy was moved to Jerusalem, and Christian Zionist pastors offered prayers at the ceremony. Both Israel and American evangelicals cite the Bible to justify their colonial policies. When Israel's invasion of Gaza began, Franklin Graham met with Netanyahu in December 2023, and 15 evangelical Japan pastors visited the Israeli embassy in Japan to express their support for Israel.

What do you guys think of this? Don't you think that trying to advance God's history by force is the same as a cult? It seems to me that American evangelicals, Japan evangelicals, are trying to create the kingdom of God by compromising with the devil.

How did God respond to the demonic forces that ruled the world and destroyed man and the world? Henri Nouwen goes on to say:

● "In becoming the helpless Jesus of Nazareth, God appeared to us and removed the illusion of power. It is to break down the walls of power through utter

impotence."

Helplessness does not mean doing nothing. The other day, I listened to a Myanmar pastor, Pastor Makin Sansan Aung. Myanmar's military coup d'état has been going on for four years. The army is massacring the people who resist one after another. Just because they bombed villages and campaigned to put flowers on their heads, the women were taken away and never returned. Teenagers are killed and sold to organ trafficking. There are no human rights. The UN doesn't do anything either. Most of the churches were destroyed. I was shocked to see a picture of a single Sister kneeling and praying in front of many soldiers with weapons. Dr. Sansan said: "Where is God?" When will they help you? Isn't it? No, God is not above, but in those who are killed. He is with us and bears our sufferings with us." There are two kinds of power. It is a force from below and a force from above. The power from below is the power that the devil gives, while the power from above is the power that God gives. The power from below is the power to destroy, but the power from above is the power to reconcile and unite. What we must seek is power from above. It is the power to forgive and love given by the Holy Spirit.

Esther was the queen of the Jews who saved Israel from the evil plot to exterminate the Jews during the Persian era, and she was popular in church schools, but after the Jews were saved, she asked the Persian king for revenge for two days (Esther 9), and she was accepted. Why is there such a brutal story? Pastor Yasuo Enomoto said, "When I traveled to Israel, I saw a memorial to the Jews who were massacred in World War II. I understand the grief over the death of my compatriots. But when I visited, I wondered if the Jewish tragedy would happen again. He who does not know that he has been forgiven cannot forgive others." He said. Christianity is those who have cast away their grudges in Christ. Because Christ has forgiven us. We believe in Christ's way of life that forgives our enemies. Listen to the story of John and Sandy :

●One day, John said to Sandy: "We've never had a fight before, let's fight like everyone else," Sandy asked. "But how do I get started?" he said, "It's easy. It's mine,' and you say, 'No, it's mine.' Then the fight will begin." So they sat down, and John took one of the building blocks and said: "This is mine," Sandy said, looking at him kindly. "If that's the case, I'll take it," and thus the fight did not take place.

Beware of the temptation of the power that the devil offers you. It is the "power of lies." The "power of truth" is the power of God's love, the power of forgiveness,

and the power to give oneself for the sake of others. I would like to pray that you will give me that strength.