

Sunday, February 16, 2025 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

"Where is happiness " Pastor Takaaki Inoue

Proverbs 8:32~36, Luke 15:11~25

① 【The horror of sin ~ Make the imaginary image chase ~】

This parable was told because the Pharisees and Bible scholars who saw Jesus when He was with sinners complained. (Luke 15:1~2) The father symbolizes God and the two sons symbolize us humans, but here the elder brother symbolizes the scribes and Pharisees, and the younger brother symbolizes sinners. But we must not forget that we can be both. When the younger son says, "Give me a share of the property that I am to receive" (v. 12), the father divides the property among the elder brother and the younger brother. The younger brother turned it into money and left for a distant country. A country far from God symbolizes "this world." The younger brother longs for this world and wastes his fortune in debauchery, exhausting everything. A terrible famine occurs, and he begins to have trouble eating, so he comes to take care of the pigs. Pigs are unclean animals in Israel, which means that he defiled his mind and body in order to live. The devil whispers. Spiritual ignorance wastes all your blessings and wastes your life (time) on things that do not bear fruit. All happiness passes and never returns. It is only after we lose it that we realize the blessing we have been given, and we regret why we could not have rejoiced and cherished it more. Someone once said, "Don't look for happiness far away, look for happiness within a meter around you," but we look for it far away. No matter how much abundance is given, man is not satisfied with it and does not have the power to receive grace. That is the horror of sin.

② 【What is conversion ~Longing for goodness~】

When hunger reached its extreme, he said, "He turned to me" (15:17). "At my father's place, there is so much bread for so many of his employees, and yet I am about to starve to death here" (15:17). What does it mean to return to ourselves?

●A certain alcoholic used to work as an office worker, but he got tired of quotas, quit his job, opened a boutique with his parents' money, but his business failed, he started drinking alcohol, ran away from home and started living in Kamagasaki. I once heard a story about a person who was drinking at a restaurant and watching TV and wondering, "What am I doing here?" and then went home and started treatment.

In everyone's mind, "What am I doing here? It's pathetic." The human mind and body are endowed with the ability to recover and become good, the ability to heal (self-healing). It is an image of God, a fragment of divinity, in which God is

embedded in us. This is something that cannot be destroyed by sin. Love is the energy that makes it blossom. Conversion and repentance are not about giving up evil deeds for fear of punishment, but rather about something more positive, a return to the good, a longing for the good. And to act in order to gain the beauty that has been lost. Ayako Sono has this to say.

●"Virtue is not about looking back at results, virtue is about raising one's eyes to a goal. Even if you fail, don't be discouraged, but keep going to the ultimate of your beauty."

This beauty of oneself is the "image of God, the likeness of Christ" that lies dormant within us. That's what we pursue. "Sin is a part of me, not everything, I am really beautiful," and never give up.

③ **【There is no one who is righteous in heaven. Heaven is a place filled with God's mercy.】** So he gets up and goes back to his father's house. Then, "Even though he was far away, the father found his son, took pity on him, ran to him, hugged his neck, and kissed him" (15:20~21). The son tries to apologize to his father, but he hardly listens. I immediately ordered him to dress him in his best clothes, give him a ring, and put on his shoes. It symbolizes the "incorruptible body", "the qualifications of the child of God", "freedom". These are not given to us because we are right, but because of God's mercy. In English, "Father... was filled with compassion for him." "I was filled with pity for my son." We see that mercy is in God's control. Because of this mercy, we can be forgiven, saved, and entered into the kingdom of God. Heaven is "a country filled with the mercy of the Father." Before he got home, he was going to confess to his father: "I have sinned against heaven and against my father, and I no longer deserve to be called a son. Make me one of the hired men." (15:18~19) Do you notice that he is renounced both his righteousness and his rights as a son? At first, it wasn't. He asserts his rights by saying, "Give me the property that I am supposed to receive" (15:12).

●Mariam Bauardi, a Palestinian Carmelite nun who died in 1878 at the age of 33 as a nun at the gatekeeper of a Carmelite monastery in Bethlehem, wrote in her diary, "When you go to heaven, you will be confused by many saints who have quite a few flaws. But I don't see any flaws in arrogance. On the contrary, if you look down on hell, you will be surprised to see that there are many virtuous people crowded in hell. But there is absolutely no virtue of humility to be found." I wrote. In other words, there is no one in heaven who claims his righteousness or rights. However, if you look around hell, you will find that it is full of righteous people and people who claim their rights.

Here I feel that there is something that is missing in this world. I feel that Christians today are too insisting on righteousness and rights when they talk

about "human rights, human rights" (which is also important).

●Ayako Sono also writes this. "Anyone who allows themselves to do something that smells a little evil has a good face. I don't know how much better I like it than someone who thinks I've done nothing wrong." "The races I didn't befriend in my life were people who thought they were doing the right thing humanely."

My brother, who lived a serious life, said, "I have never disobeyed a commandment. And yet you don't give me anything. You only love your little brother. It's unfair!" and asserted his justice and rights. This is the scribes and the Pharisees. But he must have had his fortune divided. Their bodies were on God's side, but their hearts were far from heaven. That's why we have to be careful.

④ 【The sacrament is a feast of celebration】

My father says. "Bring a fattened calf and slaughter it, and eat it and celebrate. for this son was dead and came back to life, and he was gone and he was found." (Verses 23~24) In Christianity, death means living apart from God, who is the true life. Since separation from God, who is life, is death, return to God is life. He came back to life because he had returned to God. God rejoices and holds a feast. The template is the sacrament. The sacrament is a ceremony in which Christ is slaughtered and eaten, and the resurrection of man is celebrated. Motokichiro Aisaka said, "All those who are connected to the trunk of Christ become disciples of Christ and live like Him, and at the center of them is Christ who came in the flesh and Christ who rose again. The place where we can eat the flesh of Christ and rise again is the church." There was a passage in one of the books about the believers who came out of the church after the service.

●When they came out of worship, every man and woman in our village had become "theophoros," or bearer of God. Everyone had received the Eucharist. So in their veins flowed the blood of God. They were children of God, and they were deified. Surely these people were crude, pitiful, poor peasants. ... But when they came out of the church, they carried God in them. ... When a person carries a lamp or a candle, his face shines with the flame. When we carry within ourselves God, the light of light, the whole body and the whole body are transformed, beautifully adorned, and illuminated from within. ... I have never seen the skin of flesh more beautiful than the faces of those who bear the dazzling light of God in themselves.

Happiness is God's overflowing love, and knowing that you have been loved. It is to know that everything in life is from God, and that everything is God's grace. It is to believe in God as true life and to continue to live with Him.