

Sunday, February 23, 2025 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

"What is the Fall" Pastor Takaaki Inoue

Genesis 3:1~13, Mark 12:28~34

❶ 【Sin is not being able to become a real person】

What can we be saved from? It could be answered, "from a fallen and sinful state." So today I want to talk about what the Fall is.

Genesis 3 describes the beginning of human sin. In the center of the Garden of Eden were the "Tree of Life" and the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil," but God told Adam, "Take and eat from all the trees in the Garden, but never from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If you eat it, you will surely die." (Genesis 2:17). These two trees are depicted as symbols of the two ways of living life. The tree of life is a symbol of how to live by God, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a symbol of how to live by one's own strength, becoming wise, and gaining wisdom like God. It teaches that since man has been given free will by God, he has had two choices from the beginning: a way of living with God and a life apart from Him. So what is sin? The Greek word "hamartia," which means "to miss the mark." Let's not think of sin legally as a violation of the commandments. Rather, think of it as a state in which human existence as a whole has not become a real person. You can see this in the world today. People who wage war, leaders of countries who think only for their own interests, parents who kill their own children with impunity, etc. Aren't you ashamed of yourself as a person?" Not a person (not a person)!" It is often said. The fact that man is created as the image of the Triune God means that the real man is one who loves one another. It is a sin that it is not so.

●When I was a seminarian, I was often told this in class. "Only Jesus Christ can truly be called a man. It's a nobody."

❷ 【Dialogue with the Devil】

So how did this happen? There was a serpent in the Garden of Eden. The serpent is depicted as a symbol of the devil. The serpent said to the woman. Since God said, "Take and eat from every tree in the garden," we can see that the devil speaks the exact opposite of God. It was to make her think that God was a fool, to make Eve's heart uneasy and to make her doubt about God. Eve said, "We can eat the fruit of the tree in the garden, but God has said that we must not eat, touch, or die from the fruit of the tree that grows in the center of the garden." (3:3). Eve also included the tree of life as a forbidden tree, and added the words "do not touch it." Then the devil said, "You will never die, and God knows that when you eat it, your eyes will be opened, and you will know good

and evil like God." (3:4~5).

●The other day, I heard a story about a lawyer who joined the Unification Association for only one year when he was in college. He said, "When you're 22 years old, it's upsetting to be told straight up that sin is inherited." The cult affirms, but the church does not. That's why they are dragged away by what the cult says.

When they took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and ate it, their eyes were opened, as the devil had said, but they opened to the world. They find out that they are naked and cover their hips with fig leaves. "Nakedness" is a symbol of weakness. It means that man knew and feared his weakness and began to decorate it with various things. Humans who have acquired knowledge become more and more anxious. Because I know that I am weak.

③ 【Consequences of sin ~ Loss of fellowship ~】

What happened as a result of sin? When Adam and Eve heard God walking, they "hide among the trees in the garden, avoiding the face of the Lord God." When God called Adam, he said, "I heard your footsteps in the garden, and I am frightened, and I am hiding, for I am naked." (Genesis 3:10). He also blamed Eve for eating the fruit of the tree, and Eve blamed the serpent. Here it is written how the "relationship" is gradually crumbling due to sin. People will move away from God, and they will live a life that is far away from those with whom they live. Loss of fellowship is a symptom of sin. St. Macarius in the 4th century said, "In hell people do not look at each other's faces." Those who have moved away from God will eventually not be able to hear God's voice and will not hear it from themselves. We cease to see God, and we become invisible. They also distance themselves from people and eventually shut themselves up within themselves. It's getting cloudier and cloudier. Adam failed to hear God's words and see Him. That is why we must restore this fellowship.

●Before the war, Professor Kenzo Sawasaki, who evangelized the Atami River in China, left a sentence called "To the Wilderness." "What kind of place is the wilderness? When I looked it up, I found that the word "wilderness" originally comes from the verb "to speak." It would mean a place with a voice. What does that mean? Everyone would think that the wilderness is a place without people and without voices. I wondered, so I did some more research and thought about it. I go out into the wilderness alone early in the morning because I want a quiet place away from the desert. This is because I want to pray quietly and become familiar with the Bible alone. ... It means where God speaks, where God's voice is. ... The wilderness is a deserted place. But where God is. The wilderness is a place where God speaks. But it is also the voice of the devil. It is also a place where the voice of an angel is heard. But when God speaks, all voices will be

silenced. What is even more interesting is that in Hebrew the sanctuary is called debir, which would be very closely related to dober, which means wilderness. The Holy Place or Most Holy, ... It is there that he receives oracles. It is a place where God speaks. The priest hears this, and the prophet preaches it."

In order to hear God's voice, we must turn away from the voice of man. Our daily lives are filled with human voices. TV, magazines, news reports, and conferences are all human voices. You can't hear God's voice from there. Modern man does not know the time to be still. At the foot of Mount Sinai is the oldest monastery, St. Catherine's Monastery. Monasteries were built in remote wilderness or on cliffs. I have heard that it is written in the Psalms, "There shall be destruction in the city" (Psalm 55:12), so they went out into the wilderness. We cannot find God in man. Both Elijah and Moses met God in the wilderness. Even Jesus wakes up early in the morning and prays in secluded places. It is in this wilderness that faith is nurtured. In the Bible we read last week, there is a story about Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers who came to call Jesus when many people were sitting around Jesus in the house and listening to him. At that time, instead of going outside, Jesus looked at the people sitting around him and asked, "Who is my mother, my brother, ... Take a look. Here is my mother, my brother." (Mark 3:34). The church is a group of people gathered around Christ, sitting around Him, and listening to His words. Such a person is the one whom Jesus really calls his family. So is prayer. Some people think that prayer is about speaking earnestly to God, but this is not the case. Prayer is to be still and hear God's voice. Remember the boy Samuel. "Please speak, I am listening." (1 Samuel 3:10). It is the Lord who speaks, not us. Do you know why monastic prayers read so many psalms, prayers, and the Bible? To listen and listen to it. In the monastery prayers, there is no free prayer. We must listen earnestly to God's Word. I don't want to lose this kind of prayer.

●Pastor Yasuro Enomoto writes: "Today we often hear the warning of the prophet Amos, 'Famine of hearing the word of the Lord,' and it is true that the strength of the church and the believers today is that they do not stand on the word of the Lord. ... Today, there are few times for you and me to stand in the wilderness. ... It will be necessary to unite people and expand the organization. But if God's Word is not heard, it is like a light bulb without current. ... It is only through the word of God that we too can have meaning and exert our power."

Until we hear God's voice, let us retreat into the wilderness, alone. "Please speak, I am listening." Let's pray. I want to go back to the basics of listening to God's word and living according to it.