

Sunday, March 2, 2025 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

"The Last Judgment" Pastor Takaaki Inoue

Proverbs 19:11~17, Matthew 25:31~46

① 【There is an end to this world】

I have been thinking about it lately. When I think of the people around me who have passed away, I realize that a person's life is short and ends in the blink of an eye. I began to wonder if I had come to this world on some errand. When the errand is done, they leave. If you compare it to a stage, you have your own stage and your role is decided, and when it's over, the next new stage appears, and I step off the stage and someone else takes the stage. God is the director and director, and each of us has a specific role to play, and we cannot choose for ourselves. We have no choice but to do the work that God has given us to do.

The world is truly unfair and unreasonable, and if this world were everything, there could be no more unfortunate. Christianity clearly says that there is an end to the world. Imperfection does not last forever, and when perfection comes, it must leave. It is to understand that this world is imperfect, and not to demand perfection from people or from this world. It's about withdrawing yourself with "well, it's like this." Because there are many people who want perfection in people. But the new world that God gives us is perfect, and the life that has been started there will never end. "I have also seen a new heaven and a new earth, and the first heaven and the first earth have gone away, and there is no more sea." (Revelation 21:1) There will be no tears, no death, but eternal life. We will call that perfect world the kingdom of God, where we will live forever with God as our master. That's why we don't think about being rewarded in this life, but about being rewarded in the next life. The reward is not in this world, but in the kingdom of God. It seems that those who receive it in this world will not receive it in the kingdom of God.

● The monk of Athos in Greece said: "For me, Mount Athos (which may be replaced by this world) is like a pulley or an elevator. I don't stay in elevators. I am only here to go to heaven. I don't sleep in elevators. I am thinking of the one who is waiting at the door."

② 【The standard of judgment is love】

Today's passage in the Bible is called the "Last Judgment." At the end of the world, Christ will come to this earth again with an angel in tow. It is to rule His world and make all things new. At that time, the Last Judgment will take place. Christ sits on the throne of glory as the King of the world, and all people are

made to stand before it, divided into right and left, that is, heaven and hell. The criterion for this is love of neighbor. "For you fed me when I was hungry, gave me drink when I was thirsty, gave me lodging when I was traveling, clothed me when I was naked, visited me when I was sick, and visited me when I was in prison" (Matthew 25:35~36) When those who enter heaven say, "I don't remember when I did that," Christ replied, "What did you do to one of the least of these, my brother? It's what you've done for me." (25:40). Therefore, when we look at a person, we must see in him the things of God. It is the image of God, the mark of God, and all life belongs to God and is holy. Even if we cannot believe in the things that come from man (sin), we must believe in the things of God. The Lord questions our practice of love, not our faith. Faith is meaningless if it is not accompanied by practice. If you believe, even evil spirits believe in God. Those who hear God's words but do not do them will be like houses built on sand, and they will lose everything. How we interact with our neighbors in this life will determine our next life.

To briefly describe hell, God did not create hell. It is man who created hell. God does not send people to hell. "God wants all people to be saved and come to know the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Because God has given us free will, we can choose to reject Him and stay in hell until the end. But even if man rejects God, God's love for man does not change. Hell is always surrounded by heaven. That's all you need to know.

③ 【Be patient and keep doing good】

What Christ asks of us is not a big thing. It is a very ordinary neighborly love: "Feed, dress, shelter, visit prison, and ask when you are sick."

●Pastor Kiyonosuke Oshio has this to say. "Sometimes I felt like what I was doing was so small that it was all in vain, and I thought about quitting many times. Strangely enough, however, I have repeatedly experienced that what I have been involved in while praying has a kind of ripple effect, even if I do not see a change in itself. ... At one point, I remembered the law of conservation of energy, which I learned in physics in high school. It is that law that the energy you put into things is not drowned out somewhere, but is converted into heat and preserved. I have come to believe that even in situations where I have been involved with my heart and soul and cannot even find a clue to a solution, if my energy that I put into it remains as heat, it is not in vain, and something may change someday."

I feel like I know something. There is a passage in the Bible that I couldn't help but wonder. "Their cry for help because of their labor reached God" (Exodus 2:23), or the angel said to the centurion Cornelius, "Your prayers and alms have

reached before God and have been remembered." (Acts 10:4). The phrase "reach God" is used. I used to think that prayers would arrive immediately, but it seems that some prayers take a long time to reach God. That's why God can't move right away. I think they are testing us, or they are waiting for the right time. Sometimes it seems that praying and praying will not change anything, but instead, the energy of prayer is accumulating and accumulating more and more. And at one point, it explodes and pours from top to bottom. Then we receive power and we can become God's instruments. That's why I don't give up on prayer and good deeds, but keep doing it.