

Sunday, March 9, 2025 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

"I am the resurrection and the life" Pastor Takaaki Inoue

1 Corinthians 15:12~17, John 11:17~27, 38~44

❶ 【Christ is the resurrection】

Jesus and his party arrived in Bethany, four days after Lazarus died and was buried in the tomb. At that time, it was believed that the souls of the dead would wander around the grave in order to re-enter the corpse, but on the fourth day the spirits would leave. So four days was a hopeless number. His sister Martha greeted him and said, "Lord, if you had stayed here, my brother would not have died" (verse 21). After this, her sister Maria says the same thing. "Lord, if you had stayed here, my brother would not have died" (verse 32) This is the confession of faith of the church spoken through their mouths. A similar lyric appears in Hymn 21, number 316. "If there is a resurrected Lord, neither the world nor death can separate me from Him."

When Jesus said to Martha, "Your brother will be resurrected" (11:24), Martha replied, "I know that you will be resurrected at the resurrection of the last days" (11:24). In response, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life, and whoever believes in me will live even if he dies. Whoever lives and believes in me will never die." I was told. Like Martha, there are Christians who believe that the resurrection is something that happens after death. But here Jesus said that when He was alive, He was the resurrection and the life. The existence of Jesus is the resurrection and life. Many Christians don't know that. Jesus has been the resurrection and life since the beginning of the world, and He has been resurrected since the very beginning of His coming to this world. He died once, but rose again on the third day. We cannot stop the killing of Christ's life or His resurrection. He is God, and he cannot be killed because he has never sinned.

●Chrysostomos of the 4th century said at the end of his life at the age of 62, "No one can destroy anyone unless he destroys himself with his sins," but Christ cannot kill him because he is sinless.

Resurrection is not a natural power that human beings have. When we die, we don't all come back again. A sinful person cannot be resurrected. Those who simply believe in Jesus, specifically, who become one with Jesus, who is the body of the resurrection, can be resurrected in the same way and gain eternal life. That's why we fear to turn away from Christ God. Those who have become one with Jesus from this world will begin their resurrection in this world and will be completed in the next life. Once resurrected, even if the body is dead, it is still alive. The key is Christ. Those who have Christ do not die. Because he is the tree of life. If you take and eat the fruit, you will live forever.

② 【Man is powerless before the power of death】

When Jesus saw Mary and many others crying, He said, "With indignation in my heart, and with excitement." When the people said, "Lord, come and see," Jesus "wept." and then said, "Jesus came to the tomb with resentment in his heart again." (verse 38). It says that he was outraged twice. What was Jesus angry about? We are powerless before the forces of death. Sometimes it seems that faith and even prayer have no power before death.

● There is a Meiji Christian named Kanzo Uchimura. When he lost his daughter, he left this sentence. "I prayed for the healing of my only daughter's illness. I said, 'Do not be afraid, but believe, and your daughter will be saved.' I received the words of Jesus as the words spoken to me. I... She believed that her daughter would be healed by prayer. I didn't doubt this until she passed out. ... At this time, I thought that I would surely witness a miracle. But, alas, Jairus's daughter was healed, but my daughter was not. ... My dear daughter died according to the laws of nature. I was disappointed. I doubted the efficacy of the prayer. People said. God has punished you for your sins. Also others said. Your prayers were not heard because you did not have true faith. At times like these, the position of believers is indeed pitiful."

But what about God? Is even God powerless before the power of death? When Jairus's daughter died, a messenger came to him and said, "The young lady is dead, and she will no longer bother the teacher." (Mark 5:35). He said, "Jesus, I can't do it anymore, please take me back." At the tomb of Lazarus, when Martha was told to "remove the stone," Martha said, "It has been four days, and it is gone" (John 11:39). She thought that even Jesus could not do it. We all feel that way. Even God is powerless before the power of death. Is God incapable of dealing with the power of death? Does God have no choice but to watch in silence and regret as the treasure-like human beings He created with His heart and soul collapse through death? Will God be defeated by death? Will life lose to death? Seeing that death is destroying the human beings He created, completely diminishing over them, and causing grief, the Lord is angry with His enemy, death, and He is also angry at man's unbelief. Man has become accustomed to death, but God is not. Death is the enemy of God. "Death will be destroyed as the last enemy" (1 Corinthians 15:26) What you have buried is the faith of the resurrection, the faith in God Almighty. Like the servant of Talent, he buried his faith in the soil.

③ 【Remove the tombstone】

Therefore, the Lord commands, "Take away the stone." They have buried their faith in the soil and even sealed it with stones. Therefore, I command you to remove the stone of unbelief. The Lord can do anything without our help, but

He requires our faith and action. "Fill the bowl with water" (John 2:7), "Take away the stone," and "How many loaves of bread are there?" Come and see." (Mark 6:38) We need our faith and action to see the glory of God. It takes courage to remove the stones. It's okay to be suspicious, so do as you're told.

At that time, Lazarus came out of the tomb with his face covered and his hands and feet wrapped in cloth. Jesus told the people, "Untie them and let them go" (11:44). Like Lazarus, we were bound by various things and were crippled. His face was covered and he could not see the grace. Jesus came to this world to free us from the things that bind us. It is deliverance from evil spirits, the law, disease, sin, and death, and freedom from the fear of them. Even though we have sinned, we have met the One who forgives us and loves us. I met the One who would raise me from the dead. In this way, I was freed from fear.

● In the hymn (troparion) of the old prayer book, it is written:

"Lord, those who have no breath heard your voice and immediately became living, and rose from the dead to praise you.

"Lazarus, what are you waiting for? Jesus, your friend, is calling you to stand outside and come out. Go right away. It will make it easier for me too. From the time I swallowed you, I am urged to spit it out."

Four days had passed since Lazarus died, and his spirit descended into the shadows, where he would have met countless dead men. He was becoming a companion of the dead. But outside the tomb, Christ, the life, is calling. Those who hear this voice will be brought back to life. The words of Christ can take you from death to life, from darkness to light. If you are now in hell, in the world of death, hear the voice of Christ. The resurrection of Lazarus is the beginning of mankind's victory over death. The defeat of death began. This is because God Christ Himself, not Lazarus, is about to descend into hell.

● The other day I watched a program called "Prevato" on TV. It is a variety show that has been running for 13 years, and celebrities compete by making haiku and drawing watercolors. It stands for "Pressure Battle". If you look at watercolor paintings, there are people who paint stunning pictures that are remarkable. I thought about it when I saw it. Humans are different from animals. They have a tremendous ability to imitate.

Human beings have the ability to resemble the devil as much as possible, but at the same time, they also have the ability to become infinitely more like God. So don't give up. We must look to Christ and listen to Him. If the painter looks closely at the model, the result is a wonderful picture, but if he takes his eyes off the model, the result is a picture that does not resemble him. Whoever

continually gazes upon Christ will surely become more like Him. So pray without ceasing. Listen. Execute.