

Sunday, April 27, 2025 Morning Worship Sermon

"Scars on the hands and sides" Pastor Takaaki Inoue
Ezekiel 37:9~14, John 20:19~31

❶ **【The secret of peace = make Christ stand in the middle】**

On the evening of the day of Jesus' resurrection, the disciples were afraid of the Jews and locked the door of their house and hid. They thought they would be caught and killed after Jesus. They were filled with fear and anxiety, but Jesus came in, stood in the middle, and said, "Peace be upon you." (v. 19) And when he showed them the scars on his hands and sides to show them that he was Jesus Himself crucified, the disciples were filled with joy. Jesus said again, "Peace be upon you." (v. 21) This greeting, "Peace be upon you," has been inherited by Christianity and is used in worship with the phrase "Peace of the Lord." In English, "peace be with you!" Are.

"Peace" is what we want the most. Not only the disciples, but also us can be upset and afraid of illness, war, and relationships. But when I pray, I feel strangely at peace. I feel most peaceful when I pray. When we stand before God, our fears disappear and peace comes. I think it's because Christ comes into our hearts. Christ is perfect peace. Before he died, Jesus said, "I leave you peace, I give you my peace, and I do not give it as the world gives." (John 14:27). Peace in this world is the peace that comes from having money, the peace of mind that comes from health, and the peace of mind that comes from the absence of disasters and wars. It is all peace that comes from the side, and that peace is turned upside down in an instant. There is no perfect peace in this world. But the peace that Christ gives us is not like this. It is the peace that comes from above, the peace of the Holy Spirit, the peace that does not disappear in the face of death. Yet some Christians seek peace on the side. I believe that if we change the world, the environment, and the social system, peace will come. But if Christ does not stand in your midst, no matter how much you change your surroundings, peace will not come.

●Pastor Yasuo Enomoto writes: "The Christian faith ... You have to know the heart clearly. If the center of the circle is known, the distance from the center to the circumference of the circle will all be the same. "He who creates light, who creates darkness, who brings peace, who creates disaster. I am the Lord, the one who does these things." (Isaiah 45:7) ... If you understand that, darkness and light will be the same thing."

The center of the circle is Christ. In Paul's words, "The secret plan of God is

Christ in you" (Colossians 1:27). It's a complete turnaround. The secret of peace is to place Christ in the center of your heart. "After all, health comes first! But Christ comes first!" Let's say.

② 【The birth of the church, the new Israel, and its mission】

After this, Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, so I will send you" (verse 21), and he breathed on his disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whoever sins you forgive, they will be forgiven. If you do not forgive anyone's sins, they will remain unforgiven." (vv. 22~23). This is the article in the Gospel of John, which is said to be Pentecost. At the beginning of creation, God created man by breathing the breath of life into man's nostrils, but here His disciples were recreated in a new body by blowing into the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, through Christ. It is the body of Christ. Those who are anointed with the Holy Spirit become Christ. We, too, have become little Christ. It is because He will be sent to this world as the successor of Jesus' work. Here the disciples are still immature, they are afraid, and they do not have enough faith. Still, the church was started. Don't be afraid if you're weak. We must go out and take away the sins of others. For He said, "Whoever sins you forgive, his sins will be forgiven, and if you do not forgive anyone's sins, they will remain unforgiven." Religion is called "re-union" and means "to reunite." It is the job of the church to unite God and man, and to connect man.

●For the first time in a long time, there was an alumni reunion at my mother church. Pastor Izumi, Pastor Kawasaki, and myself, three pastors from Osaka Nishinoda Church, and friends of faith gathered. Pastor Izumi invited me to church, and Pastor Kawasaki invited me to the Orthodox church. Also, without this congregation, I would not be connected to the church, and without their support, I would not have been able to become a pastor. We are all strangely connected. The thread that binds people in the middle is the thread of Christ. Christ is bringing people together and bringing them together. Therefore, if Christ disappears from among them, they will be scattered. Let us not forget that the Church has become a new priest, a new Israel, that unites God and man.

③ 【Faith cannot be born unless it is united with Christ】

Thomas, one of the disciples, could not meet Jesus because he was not with the disciples. When his fellow disciples said, "We have seen the Lord" (v. 25), he said, "I will never believe unless I see the nail marks on his hand, and put this finger in the nail mark, and put this hand in his side" (v. 25). Thomas has the nickname Didymo (twin). It teaches him that there are two selves in his heart: the

"believing self" and the "believing self." He said, "I don't believe it!" But the truth is that I want to believe it. But I feel unbelievable frustration and frustration. I know because I've been like that too. There have been times when I have envied and been angry with people who can be trusted. That's why I am Thomas. This is what man really is. It is the limit of human beings. This is because faith does not spring from within, but comes from outside through communion with God. Eight days later, Sunday, the disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. The disciples must have invited Thomas to worship. Then Jesus appeared again and said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at my hand, and stretch out your hand and put it in my side. Be a believer, not an unbeliever" (John 20:27). Thomas immediately made a wonderful confession of faith: "My Lord and my God" (Ibid. 20:28). In order to believe, we need to work from God. If Jesus hadn't appeared eight days later, Thomas wouldn't have believed. However, if you don't really want to meet Jesus, you can't meet him. Appliances will not work unless they are connected to a socket. It's the same with faith: if you don't reach out to Christ, if you don't connect with Him, faith won't come to you. Jesus always appears in the church every Sunday. So reach out to Christ.

● Christ's resurrected body was not a spirit but a divine body, and He was free to enter the room, touch it, and eat it. I wondered if the scars on my sides and limbs would remain even though my body was glorified. The resurrected body should be glorious, powerful, and incorruptible. (1 Corinthians 15:43) When he appeared to the traveler at Emmaus, he did not appear to have any scars. Scars disappear or appear. Didn't he dare to show the scar for Thomas' sake? To reach deeply into the wound in Christ's side, to put your fingers in the wound of Christ's hand, is to remember Christ on the cross, and at the same time to remember our sins. It's about remembering that the Lord took my sins upon Himself and forgave them. Thomas needed to be touched by Christ, to be indulgent.

It is not in human power that Christianity began. The disciples were too afraid to do anything. The power of death binds a person with fear and makes him stiff. That's where life came in. When the disciples were touched by life, their fear disappeared, they gained strength, they rose up, and they began to move. This is the beauty of Christianity. We will be resurrected as Christ was resurrected. So it's okay to go to zero or even be negative. Touch Christ as Thomas did. Then faith and life begin. Whenever you touch Christ, something begins. He is the Creator and the One who creates something out of nothing. Such was the case with this church. Even when no one was there, when I touched Christ, joy and life came in, and I started moving.

●St. Irenaeus of Lyon in the 2nd century said: "The Lord Jesus Christ is the one who became man among men in the last days, that is, in the beginning of the end, that may unite man to God."

In order not to end man in death, He took on the death of man. Therefore, even when it seems that it is over, when we touch Christ, a new thing begins. So reach out and touch Christ like Thomas. Then something will start inside you.