

Sunday, May 25, 2025 Morning Worship Sermon

" Do You Love Me?" John 21:15~22 Pastor Takaaki Inoue

① 【We need a leader who recognizes our weaknesses】

After breakfast on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus opened his mouth and said to Peter: "Simon the son of John, do you love me more than these men?" (v. 15) Peter (meaning rock) is the nickname given by Jesus, and Simon is his real name. "I ask you, do you love me more than the disciples around you, even if you lay down your life?" I was asked. The reason why Jesus was asked this is that before Jesus was crucified, Peter said, "When everyone stumbles, I do not stumble. Even if I have to die with you, I will never say that I don't know you." (Mark 14:29~30). However, after this, when he felt that he was in danger, he lied three times, saying, "I don't know such a person," and betrayed Jesus. Three times he said, "I don't know such a person," and here again Peter was asked three times, "Do you love me?"

Peter replied, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you" (v. 15). The wording is different, but the answer is the same three times. It's like, "Yes, I don't have enough love to give up my life, and if I try again, I might run away again. But you know that I am a flawed love, and I love you." It means. There is a difference between God's love and our human love. Human love can only be loved by those who love us, those who like us. If you think you're going to lose something, you won't be able to love.

Peter needed to know who he really was. If you don't make mistakes, you won't know who you really are. God dared Peter to fail. Otherwise, he would have stood up and judged his brothers, and the flock would have scattered. Psychologist Gordon Allport says, "Those who deal with human problems need to accept ambiguity." The person who stands on top must be gray. If you try to clarify black and white, or if you are eager to find the cause, you will become mentally ill, and people will drift away. The reason why God left us with weakness and sin even though Christ was resurrected and victorious is to humble us. If we become perfect and stop sinning, we will be ridiculously arrogant people. Land where even weeds do not grow is abnormal. People who know that they are also repeat failures will not blame others for their failures. Because I think it's the same for me. The leader Jesus teaches is not a strong leader, but a leader with weaknesses, a leader with wounds.

Tomihiko Hoshino, a Christian who drew a collection of poems with a brush in his mouth, left the following poems.

"It seems to me that the gathering of sorrow is closer to happiness than the gathering of joy.

It seems to me that the gathering of the weak is closer to the truth than the gathering of the strong.

I feel that the gathering of happiness is closer to love than the gathering of happiness."

●Japan is an economically rich country, and although there are not so many people with depression in the world, suicide is one of the top classes. It is said that this is because the community (family) has collapsed and people are scattered and isolated in society. Akita Prefecture used to have the highest number of suicides, but it seems that it has been decreasing recently due to efforts. That's because we created a group to "talk about suicide." There is only one rule for that group. It's not bragging. Don't blame others for their failures. It's about trusting God absolutely. With such a group (family), you can feel safe to make mistakes and show your vulnerability. And those who are accepted even if they show weakness do not commit suicide.

If you go to heaven, you will be full of sinners. David, Solomon, Abraham, and Peter were all people who could do nothing but ask God to forgive them. They will give us a warm welcome.

② **【Continue to be close to your brothers and sisters with a love that lacks】**

Jesus went on to say to Peter three times, "Feed my lamb" (verse 15), "Take care of my sheep" (verse 16), and "Feed my sheep" (verse 17). A sheep or lamb is a believer. Since it says "mine," the believer belongs to Christ. "Keeping/taking care" is "feed" or "Take care" in English. "Feed" means to feed, to feed, to nurture. "Take care" means to take care of or to see the troubles. Specifically, I was told to become a "priest and pastor." He tells believers to teach them about God, to pass the sacraments, to pray, and to see all kinds of troubles. This is where pastor comes from. It means a person who shepherds sheep. Caring is called "pastoral care." We, the pastors, have been entrusted with the things of Christ. He told us to take care of Christ's sheep because it was okay to have a lacked love.

I became a pastor after five years of being a believer. When I became a pastor, I had to change my mindset. You have to be an example to the flock, the pastor is the face of the church, and if the pastor is in a bad mood, the new person thinks that the church is the place for you. If the pastor is cold, I think that's what Christianity is all about. We carry Christ on our backs. I thought I shouldn't let them stumble. No matter how hard it was, I thought that I should not rest, that I should not run away, that I should accept and face everyone, and that I should

not speak up even if I was angry. But I couldn't. I was taught that I was loveless, that I was not loving others, and that I was incapable of saving them.

This is what Henri Nauen wrote in his book.

●Let's consider the meaning of the word care. The word "care" comes from the Gothic word *kara*, which means "to be heartbroken or to be sad." The true meaning of care is to break the heart, to experience grief, to cry together. It is not the attitude of the strong to the weak, the powerful to the powerless, or the haves to the have-not. In fact, if we were invited to share someone's pain before we tried to do anything about it, we would feel resistance. We try to escape from the painful reality or change it as soon as possible. It is because we are painful. But if we try to save without the care of love, we will become the rulers, the ones who will control, and the true community will not be created.

To care is to be close to others, to share their suffering with each other, to bear their burdens together, to feel their pain together, to pray with them, and to cry with them, even if they cannot be cured. There are few answers in this world. You don't have to force yourself to come up with an answer, you don't have to try to solve it. You will get the answer in the next life.

Pastor Shozo Fujiki writes:

●"Sometimes I can be meek, compassionate, and patient with people, but I'm not confident when asked if I'm going to do that with anyone. After all, it depends on the person, and it cannot be done to anyone at any time. I don't think you can choose the other person, you won't be affected by their reaction, and you can fully accept and be close to them. If you are a person who can do it, you will feel more than human. Isn't divinity not nobleness or purity, but this "draw close"? If there is a place in the world of man where God dwells, it is in the hearts of those who are close to him."

Those who are close to others reveal the image of God in this world. For God's name is Immanuel, "God is with us." In fact, Christ is with us. No matter what, no matter how much you fail, Christ will be with you. Let us rejoice in the eternal love of Christ. If you have someone you love with you, even if you have problems, it's always and everywhere in heaven.