

"I AM" Pastor Takaaki Inoue Exodus 3:1-10, 13-14, John 8:53-58

① 【Bush without burnout】

Today I will tell you the story of Moses' vocation. After fleeing from Egypt, Moses fled to the Midian region at the end of the Sinai Peninsula, where he married the daughter of the priest Jethro, started a family, and became a shepherd. Forty years had passed since he left Egypt, and he was already 80 years old. (Acts 7:23, 30) One day, he followed his flock of sheep deep into the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. One day, they followed a flock of sheep deep into the wilderness until they came to Horeb, the mountain of God, where they found a bush that was burning but not consumed. God appeared to him in the flames of the bush. This passage has been interpreted in various ways. Since the bush symbolizes the decaying things of the world and the fire symbolizes God, it has been said that it is a model for the fact that Jesus Christ, God the Son, while retaining His divinity, took a decaying human body, but the body in which God entered did not burn up. Mary's body did not burn up, even though she conceived God. The icon on the cover of today's weekly bulletin is a case in point.

● A professor at Sophia University named Riesenhuber refers to "internal concentration and external liberation. Internal concentration means to look at and meditate on the various thoughts and feelings that arise within oneself. External liberation" means to release the energy accumulated by "internal concentration" outwardly, or, to put it simply, to take action. In order to lead a fulfilling life, a balance between the two is essential.

We are all busy working every day. But if we continue to only "externally liberate" ourselves, we will surely burn out. It is said that the biggest cause of burnout comes from not taking time for "internal focus" rather than from overworking.

● When I was in seminary, Pastor Iwamoto, a church history teacher, always shone in class. When he was speaking the gospel or doing theology, his eyes were full of joy. It was as if Moses' face was shining as he spoke with God. When Moses came down from the mountain, he did not know that while he was speaking with God, the skin of his face was glowing." (Exodus 34:30) "He who looks up to the Lord will shine with light, and will not fall on his face in disgrace." (Psalm 34:5)

A decaying bush is you. But if Christ or the Holy Spirit dwells in you, you will not burn up, but be set on fire by God. In order not to burn out, you must have fellowship with God and pray. Let us be active in the power and life of God.

② 【Name of God】

Moses turned off the road to see the bush, saying, "Why doesn't that bush burn up?"

(v. 3). The word “went over” is used twice, but it really means that he had been walking on the wrong road for 40 years, and he returned to the main road. (Go over also means to change one's religious affiliation.) Then I heard God's voice. 'Moses, Moses, do not come near here. Take off your footwear from your feet. For the place where you are standing is holy ground.' (Verse 5) Taking off the footwear is a sign of slavery. The holy land means that this is also a place where God is in control. Moses has been a shepherd for 40 years in a land far from Egypt. I believe that his fellow Hebrews and the God of his ancestors were in the distant past. However, there is no such thing as running away from God, no matter how much you run away from Him. This land of Midian, from which Moses fled, is also a place where God is in control. You are my servant, God says, and you are in my hand. God commands Moses, "Go now. Go now. I will send you to Pharaoh. I will bring out my people, the people of Israel, from Egypt. (v. 10) Moses asks God's name. God tells Moses, "I am. I am the One who says, "I am. (v. 14) "This is my name forever. (v. 14) “This is my name for ever and ever, and this is my name to the world” (v. 15). (v. 15). The colloquial translation is "I am that which is and which is. It means that God is the only one who really exists. No other gods exist. They are images created by man. But this is not a name. It is the character of God. There are two other people in the Old Testament who asked the name of God. The famous one is Manoah, the father of Jacob and Samson. When Jacob asked, “Please, tell me your name,” Manoah replied, "I am the Lord your God. ' And when Jacob asked, ‘Why do you ask my name?’ He blessed Jacob on the spot." (Genesis 32:23) "What is your name? I want to entertain you. ...And the angel of the Lord answered, ‘Why do you ask my name, that it is strange?’" (Judges 13:16-18) God did not tell these two men their names either. God hides names because He cannot know. He who is beyond existence cannot be named. God is not born of anything else, is not created, and is totally independent of others. God is not bound by conditions of time, place, or environment.

It was Jesus who used this name “I AM”. He said, "Let me tell you plainly. Before Abraham was born, 'I am.'" (John 8:58), “If you do not believe that ‘I AM,’ you will die in your sins.” (John 8:24, 28) Jesus used a name that only God uses. That is why the Jews were offended. From this we see that it was Jesus who appeared to Moses. The Church represented that Christ was God by writing a cross behind Jesus' head with the initials “ø, ω, ν” of this “I AM” in it. God, who had been hidden, now appeared in the form of Jesus Christ.

③ **God of Pain**

However, I am impressed here by the following part.

• "And I saw the affliction of my people which were in Egypt, and I heard their cry because of their enemies. I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and I

have heard their cries because of their enemies, and I have known their pain. Therefore I will go down and deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and will lead them up out of this country into a land that is spacious and wonderful..." (vv. 7-8)

• "I have determined to look after you ... and to lead you up out of Egypt, where you suffer, ... to a land flowing with milk and honey." (vv.16-17)

A theologian by the name of Kazo Kitamori wrote a book titled "The Theology of God's Pain. He says that God not only looks down from high heaven to the earth, but also feels the pain of human beings. When you are with people who suffer, you also suffer. If it continues, you will become depressed. That is why we turn away. But God does not look away from those who suffer and cry out. He knows their pain. In the Bible, "to know" means to experience. God was suffering and in pain with him. God came down from heaven and decided to save mankind. It is God's decision. It is incomparable to the decision of human beings. Therefore, people will surely be saved. Because God will not stop until he saves. It was manifested as the cross of Jesus Christ.

● Norman Peale, an American pastor, said as he walked to church in the pouring rain, "Oh no, no, no, no one in their right mind would come to worship in this weather. Oh no, no, no, no one in their right mind would come to a service in this weather. I'm going to have to preach in an empty church. Oh, no, no, no." The pastor was scolded by his wife, and they prayed together.

The real problem lies in our unbelief. We give up on our own and do not pray. Not praying is not despairing of man, but actually despairing of God. The salvation of a person is not something that can be managed by human power. The desire to save people is stronger in God than in man. That person is zealous. He will do it again and again. People in this world think everything without God, but as Christians, we should include God in everything in our lives. To include God means to include hope. With Christ with us, we will always turn to good. Let us not hope in ourselves, let us not hope in others, but let us hope in Christ our God at all times.