

## Last Week's Sermon Summary

### 『Go the Way Down』

Pastor Takashi Inoue

Acts 8:1-5, 26-31, Luke 9:23-26

❶ 【By scattering】 The martyrdom of Stephen led to a great persecution against the Jerusalem church, and all but the apostles were scattered to Judea and Samaria. Why did the apostles remain in Jerusalem? Perhaps it was to protect the newly born Jerusalem church. However, when we look at Acts chapters 6-8, we find that those who were scattered did more remarkable work than the apostles. It is written. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the gospel. Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ to the people." We hate this "scattering" thing so much because it makes us weak. To scatter is to become weak. The first time the word "scatter" appears in the Bible is in the story of the Tower of Babel. The people who built the tower that reached to the heavens said, "Let us not be scattered over all the earth" (Genesis 11:4), but the Lord God scattered them from there over all the earth (Genesis 11:7). (Genesis 11:7) Throughout history, God has scattered the Israelites many times. They were slaves in Egypt and Babylon, and were released from there to return to their homeland and rebuild it, only to be destroyed again by the Romans and scattered throughout the world. In order to keep their Jewish identity intact, they wrote the stories of their ancestors, collected and edited the prophecies of God, and created the Old Testament. That is how Judaism came to be. The same is true of the Church. The Church grew by being persecuted and scattered throughout the world.

❷ 【Losing more than gaining】 A missionary evangelized the Inuit (Eskimos). That year there was a famine. The Inuit thought that the Christian missionaries had brought a god different from their own and that the local god was angry and caused the famine. So they went to the missionaries and said, "Pray to your god and give yourselves whales. If you don't give us whales, we will drop you off a cliff and kill you to appease God's wrath. The missionaries prayed fervently day and night, but could not catch any whales. The Inuit became angry and killed the missionary by throwing him off a cliff. The next day, they went down to the beach to look for the missionary's carcass and found a large whale lying beside it. They saw it, repented, and became Christians. The Christian faith is not something that is so easy to convey to people. It is not something that can be explained and understood. Faith cannot be conveyed unless we put our bodies on the line and risk our lives to convey it. Martyrdom is a sad and scary thing, but in a mysterious way, it gives birth to children of faith. Paul, who saw Stephen's martyrdom, eventually became a great evangelist. Timothy, who saw this, became a Christian again and devoted himself to it. Thus blood was shed and the church became immobile. We must think about giving rather than receiving. Giving to the extent that it doesn't hurt or itch is not giving. It is not giving if giving does not hurt you. We must really think about discarding rather than receiving. That is what it means to take up the cross and follow.

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# Weekly Report

The United Church of Christ in Japan

Miyakojima Church

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Church Established December 2, 2001

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《The Conversion of St. Paul》

## Miyakojima Church's 2025 Mission Policy

**Motto :** "Let's prepare for the construction of the church "

**Scripture :** " The toil of those who build houses is in vain, unless the Lord Himself builds them " ( Psalm 127:1)

### Goals for FY2024

- 1 Observe worship services every week and aim for an average of 27 people to attend services.
- 2 We invite one person to worship in one year.
- 3 We value the fellowship of believers.
- 4 Make concrete preparations for the construction of the church.