

Last Week's Sermon Summary

『A House of Prayer for All Nations』

Pastor Takaaki Inoue

Isaiah 56:1-8, Acts 3:1-8

① [The reason God deliberately allows suffering] The Babylonian Exile lasted seventy years. Seventy years is nearly a lifetime for a person, so they had already established their lives in Babylon. To abandon all that and return to Jerusalem required tremendous courage and faith. Therefore, not everyone returned; it seems only a portion of the people did. And it was the people who remained in Persia who spread the faith of the Scriptures. This missionary work connects to the wise men who came from the East to worship the Messiah when Jesus was born. Now, the people who returned rebuilt the temple, but it was crude. The land was barren, and life was extremely difficult. Their hope that simply returning would solve everything was cruelly shattered. Their faith was in crisis. It is said that the Book of the Law within the Old Testament was written during this time. A monk in Kyoto once said, "This year's heat made the autumn leaves less beautiful. Autumn colors flourish when the temperature difference between day and night is extreme. Nature is truly remarkable—suffering gives birth to beauty. Volcanoes exist, so hot springs exist." The people of Israel were the same. They suffered in Babylon, and suffering awaited them upon returning to Jerusalem. God did not readily grant Israel peace. We are the same. Yet I believe this was actually God's plan to cultivate faith. He constantly drives us into situations where we cannot survive without prayer. For God does not give us suffering alone; He always places

treasure within it. Those who endure suffering inevitably leave behind some beautiful fruit.

② [The Birth of the New People of Israel]

As the law was written down, people like Gentiles and eunuchs began to face discrimination. To those who had lost hope, Isaiah proclaimed God's word: "This is what the Lord says: 'Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is about to come, my righteousness is about to be revealed.'" (Isaiah 56:1) He tells them not to give up, to keep doing what is just and to keep doing acts of mercy. Specifically, this means "keeping the Sabbath and not profaning it" and "guarding against evil deeds." For us today, it means keeping worship and adhering to Christ's teachings. Verse 3 elaborates further: "Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely separate me from his people'; and let not the eunuch say, 'Behold, I am but a withered tree.'" What is being said here is that whether you are a Jew, a Gentile, or a eunuch—in other words, whoever you are—if you keep the Sabbath, worship, do what God desires, and keep His teachings, you will be accepted by God, your prayers will be heard, and your name will be remembered. What matters is obeying God. Here, God is creating a new people of Israel. Originally, "Israel" was not the name of an ethnic group but the name of believers who trust in God. Therefore, we the church are called the "New Israel." And then comes the famous words: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." (Isaiah 56:7) God's house is the temple and the church. The church is a house of prayer for all who seek to honor and obey God, and God hears the prayers of anyone who follows Him.

③ [Let us rely solely on Christ] ↗

Weekly Report

The United Church of Christ in Japan

Miyakojima Church

Mission Established December 1, 1957

Church Established December 2, 2001

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《The woman caught in the act of adultery》

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.