

November 23, 2025 Sunday Morning Service Sermon
"One Righteous Person Saves the World" Pastor Takaaki Inoue
Jeremiah 5:1-6, Romans 5:18-21, John 1:14-18

① [If there is one righteous person, I will not destroy it]

Today is Thanksgiving Day. We cannot live solely by ourselves. We sustain our own lives by consuming the lives of animals and plants. Therefore, our bodies contain many lives within them; it is not just our own life. We wish to give thanks to God, who created these lives and gave them to us, and also to give thanks to nature. Now, today we will study from the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a prophet who worked around the time of the Southern Kingdom of Judah's destruction and is known as the Prophet of Sorrow.

In chapter 5, verse 1, the Lord says: "Go through the streets of Jerusalem, look around and see if there is anyone left. Ask in the public squares if there is anyone left who does what is right and seeks truth. If there is, I will forgive Jerusalem." Though many people fill the squares and streets, the Lord asks if there is anyone who truly fears God and seeks truth. He finds none. Yet He declares that if even one such person existed, He would spare Jerusalem. Reading this brings to mind the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. God had decided to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. But Lot, Abraham's nephew, lived in Sodom. So Abraham pleaded with God: "Will you destroy the righteous along with the wicked? ... Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Genesis 18:23, 25). He pleaded for the city's salvation, arguing that if there were fifty righteous people, or forty-five, or forty, or thirty, or twenty, or even ten. God promised, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it" (Genesis 18:32). Yet, in the end, it was destroyed. Because there were not even ten righteous people.

●Pastor Yasuro Enomoto writes: "If there is even one true Christian in Japan, that person will uphold Japan and protect Japan. This provides a far more certain defense for Japan than any military force or budget could ever offer. ... The responsibility of one person is immense. God looks upon the state of one person more than He does upon the multitude. ... Just as light sand guards the boundary between sea and land, God's promise, though it may seem light to man, is eternal and unchanging."

Before you question the evils of the world, you are being questioned before God as to whether you are a true believer.

②[One person can destroy the entire flock, and one person can save the entire flock]

In the Bible, salvation is not considered an individual matter but rather something for the whole community (as a collective). For example, during the Old Testament era, when Israel attacked the small tribe of Ai, they suffered a crushing defeat. This was because one man, Achan, stole some of the things that were to be

completely destroyed and offered as a sacrifice. (Joshua 7:1) The entire flock was punished because of one person's sin. In the same way, one believer saves the entire flock. Paul writes: "Therefore, just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:18) The one sin, the one disobedience, refers to Adam. The one righteous act, the one obedience, refers to Jesus Christ. In truth, the only righteous One is Jesus. Through this One, the world is preserved, and we are saved. Protestant churches emphasize personal faith. Therefore, individuals must read the Bible and have faith to be saved. This implies that infants who cannot make a confession of faith, those with severe intellectual disabilities, or people with dementia cannot be saved. Luther spoke of the "priesthood of all believers." While this is an ideal, it is unrealistic in practice. Can everyone become like Father Kolbe? Can everyone perform the works of Mother Teresa? Absolutely not. They were chosen before birth, given a mission, and born with the gifts to fulfill it. They did not act for themselves but performed good deeds in place of many, bore witness to Christ, persevered in faith, prayed for the salvation of many, and offered themselves up. This was to manifest Christ's work in the world.

● Father John of Kronstadt wrote in the 19th century:

"When the soul is at peace and firmly grounded in faith and reverence for God, then the flock entrusted to it also stands firm in faith, leads a pure life, and preserves peace of soul. If the head is bright and clean, its limbs will also be bright and clean. Conversely, if our soul is clouded by worldly desires, the flock entrusted to us will also be enveloped in darkness. For there exists such a close relationship, such an intimate connection, between the head and the limbs, between the shepherd and the flock."

Therefore, the responsibility of church leaders is immense. It affects the entire flock. We are one body. Christ is the head, and the church is His body. We inevitably influence one another. Just as Christ sustains all humanity, those who resemble Christ sustain the small flock. Never forget that your attitude of faith will inevitably influence others.

③ **【Since people cannot change, God changed. Only God can save people.】**

The people of Jerusalem, no matter how much discipline they received, did not learn; they only grew more stubborn and refused to return to God. Both lowly and high alike did not walk in the Lord's ways; they "broke the yoke and tore off the bonds." Here it means they rejected being bound by God and severed their relationship. Reading Jeremiah, I thought: "Why are the people of Israel so stubborn, slow to understand, and disobedient? Even after experiencing miracles, they quickly forgot God. No matter how much they studied the Scriptures, they refused to accept Jesus. What a terrible people! But perhaps we are the same. Didn't Jesus' disciples argue about who was the greatest until He died? What about

Russia today? Despite having many Christians, they wage war and disobey God's commandments. America has many Christians, yet it discriminates against Black people, doesn't it?" My conclusion is this: "No matter how much humans study the Bible, they cannot keep God's commandments or obey Him. They are powerless!"

●Right now, I'm learning about "hikikomori" at a mental health study group. For those affected, withdrawing is a way to protect themselves. Telling them to "become independent" only pushes them further into a corner. That's why they stop seeing their families. The book explains it this way: "Parents... should refrain from lecturing them with 'reasonable arguments' or 'sermons' about when they should start working, what their future plans are, or what they intend to do after their parents die." This was the same for leaving a cult. You must never tell them to "quit." Because even if you say the right thing, they won't leave. No matter how much you lecture them with "reasonable arguments," it won't cure their withdrawal.

Why do we speak the truth? Because we believe that saying what is right will change the other person. This mindset must be shattered. I learned my own powerlessness when, after visiting one person 25 times to talk, they still did not leave the cult. So on the final day, I did not persuade or lecture; I just chatted casually and left. That very night, the Spirit of God worked, and that person left the cult. People cannot change others, save others, or change this world. It is impossible for humans alone. We must acknowledge this. Since people do not change, did God not change? It meant God became human and had no choice but to die on the cross, bearing humanity's sins. Unless God's only Son died, the disciples could not receive the Holy Spirit; and without the Holy Spirit coming, they could not change. Paul himself changed after receiving the Holy Spirit. Though people cannot change by their own strength alone, they can change through God's power at work. This is the conclusion I have reached.

●Author Ayako Miura writes in her book: "I have heard it said that the cross upon which Jesus Christ was crucified signifies, so to speak, God's despair toward humanity. ... Jesus' death reveals both God's despair toward humanity and God's love."

Today is Thanksgiving Day. Are you bearing good fruit that will be stored in God's heavenly storehouse? Without God's power, we cannot bear good fruit. Let us continue to pray to God, asking Him to enable us to bear good fruit in faith and deeds.