

Last Week's Sermon Summary

『Belong to the Higher Power』

Pastor Takaaki Inoue

Isaiah 65:1-5, John 8:21-25

❶ **【Jesus will soon depart】** Jesus said to the Jews, “I am going away, and you will look for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.” (John 8:21) The Jews wasted the precious opportunity to meet God face to face on earth. When the light departs, darkness reigns; when life departs, death reigns; when wisdom departs, ignorance reigns; when God departs, the devil reigns. While Jesus is near, we must secure our salvation. Grace does not last forever. Even when the genuine article is right before them, people do not seek it. They are quite content with counterfeits. Whether something is genuine or not hardly matters to them. They lack the discernment to tell the difference. Ah, how blind humanity has become! This is the symptom of sin.

❷ **【To belong to this world is to die】**

“You belong to the things below, but I belong to the things above. You belong to this world, but I do not belong to this world. That is why I told you that you will die in your sins.” (John 8:23-24) Jesus belongs to the “higher realm,” that is, the “Kingdom of God,” while the Jews belong to the “lower realm,” that is, “this world.” Therefore, Jesus told them they would die in their sins. Unless you belong to the higher realm, you will die, He said. What is this world? This world is a world without God. Lately, I've come

to feel this more and more keenly. Humanity has driven God out of this world. It is a world of humans alone, a world that tries to think of everything without God. Humans dominate this world, using resources as they please, making judgments without consulting God, passing judgment themselves without waiting for God's judgment. They do not fear God. A world separated from God is a dead world. Human sin overflows upon the earth. Where sin exists, death exists; thus, this world is a realm overflowing with death. Life comes down from heaven. For only God possesses life. This life is Christ. Those who live bound to this life are drawn up from death into life.

❸ **【I must believe that I am or I will die】**

“If you do not believe that I am, you will die in your sins,” the Lord said to the Jews. This was the third time He told them they would die in their sins. “I AM” is the name of God revealed to Moses. When Moses asked for God's name, the Lord answered, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what I AM.” (Exodus 3:14) Jesus applied this name, used only by God Himself, to Himself. “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I AM” (John 8:58). “When the Son of Man is lifted up, then everyone will know that I AM” (John 8:28). The Church depicted Christ as God by drawing a cross behind Jesus' head and placing within it the initial letters of “I AM” – “ō, ω, ν”. The hidden God has now appeared in the form of Jesus Christ. Here, Jesus told the Jews, “Unless you believe that I am God, you will die.” Today I am speaking about “belonging to what is above.”⁷

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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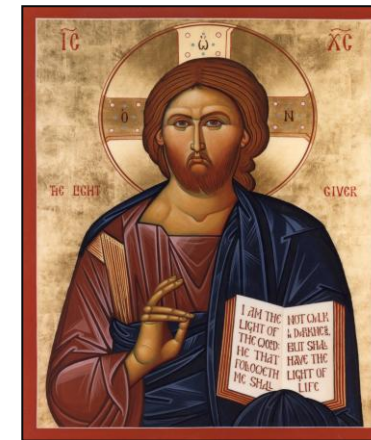
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November 9, 2025 No. 1845



《Christ, the light of the world》

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.