

Sunday, June 28, 2026 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

“The One Who Makes All Things Work for Good” Pastor Takaaki Inoue

Genesis 45:4–8, Romans 8:26–28

① 【The Story of Joseph in the Old Testament】

There is a famous passage in Romans 8:28: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Pastor Emiko Nakajima of my home church often quoted these words. She taught that for Christians who have been called according to God’s plan, no matter what trials or hardships they face, all of them will ultimately have meaning. There is a story that teaches us this very lesson: the story of Joseph in the Old Testament.

The patriarch Jacob had two wives, Leah and Rachel, and two concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah. These four women bore him twelve children; Joseph was born to Rachel, and he had a younger brother named Benjamin. Because his father loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, Joseph was hated by his brothers, and one day they sold him to a merchant for twenty pieces of silver. He was taken to Egypt and became a slave to a court official. The official’s wife made advances toward Joseph, and when he rejected her, he was thrown into prison even though he was innocent. However, while in prison, God gave him the ability to interpret dreams. After interpreting the “king’s dream”—which foretold seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine—he was released from prison two years later, became prime minister of Egypt, and saved both Egypt and the entire world from famine (and death). Joseph is said to be a type of Christ. This is because Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver and, though innocent, was placed in the prison of death, yet on the third day He rose again and became the One who saves the world from destruction.

② 【If the Lord Is With Us, All Things Work Together for Good】

Joseph suffered a series of misfortunes—he was sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers and imprisoned though he was innocent—yet there was a secret to why he did not lose hope. As the Bible says, “The Lord was with Joseph, and he prospered.” (Genesis 39:2), “The Lord was with him and made everything he did succeed” (Genesis 39:3), “The Lord was with Joseph and showed him favor, guiding him so that he found favor in the eyes of the prison warden” (Genesis 39:21), and “The Lord was with Joseph, and the Lord made everything he did succeed” (Genesis 39:23). ” (ibid. 39:23)—it is repeatedly written that “the Lord was with Joseph.” It was precisely because God was with him that he never succumbed, no matter how dire his circumstances or how much evil came his way. This is the secret to overcoming evil.

Psalms 119:68 contains the words, “You are good, and You do good to all.” God is the

most good being imaginable. When God created the heavens and the earth, there was nothing but good in this world. It is written, “God saw everything He had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). God did not create evil. Therefore, no matter how great evil may seem, it does not truly exist; it is merely a state devoid of goodness. Evil entered this world through human disobedience. Evil transformed humanity into a corrupt state and destroyed all creation. That is why God came to restore this world to goodness once again. Christ’s method of healing all creation was to unite the ailing human nature and this world with Himself.

● Nicholas Kabasilas of the 14th century said, “Humanity was separated from God by a threefold barrier: nature, sin, and death. However, through the Lord Christ, these barriers were removed one by one... for the Lord removed the barrier of human nature through the Incarnation, the barrier of sin through His death, and the barrier of death through His Resurrection.” Likewise, Gregory of Nazianzus in the 4th century said, “Truly, what is not received by Christ is not healed. But what is united with God the Christ is saved.”

In fact, when Christ laid His hands on the sick, their illnesses were healed; when He touched those born blind, their disability was transformed into a means for God’s work to be revealed. When Christ takes bread in His hands and blesses it, it becomes His holy Body, and no matter how insignificant it may be, it becomes bread that satisfies people. When He takes upon Himself the sins of humanity, they are transformed into forgiveness; and when He takes upon Himself death, the nature of that death is transformed—it is no longer decay or a curse, but is transformed into the gateway to the Resurrection.

③ **【Let’s include God in everything that happens】**

When Joseph was reunited with his brothers, he said to them, “There is no need now to feel remorse or blame one another for selling me here. God sent me ahead of you to save lives.” (Genesis 45:5), “It was not you who sent me here, but God.” (Genesis 45:8) “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is happening today: the saving of many lives.” (Genesis 50:20) When people in this world suffer, they tend to blame others, saying, “It’s that person’s fault I’m suffering,” and they harbor resentment. But Joseph was not like that. It is true that it was his brothers who sold Joseph into Egypt, and they plotted evil against him. Yet God used even the evil of those brothers (Satan) to bring about good. Joseph knew that God was at work in all that happened. And he knew that no matter how much people may plot evil, no one can thwart God’s plan of salvation.

● Ryo Saito, from Iwata City, Shizuoka Prefecture, was involved in a traffic accident during his second year of high school. He suffered a cervical spine injury

that left his arms and legs completely paralyzed and immobile, and he became dependent on a ventilator to breathe on his own. “I can’t eat by mouth; I have to have liquid food piped into my stomach through a tube inserted through my nose. I lose control of my bladder and bowels, so I can’t live without diapers. I just lie there facing the ceiling. It was so humiliating. Will I have to live like this for the rest of my life? I’d rather be dead! But I can’t even take my own life.” Baseball had been his whole life; he had played catcher for the Hamamatsu Commercial High School baseball team. The person responsible was a 27-year-old man. “How are you going to make up for putting me through this!” He felt nothing but rage. To make matters worse, the man’s car insurance had expired, so not a single yen in compensation was paid. When the perpetrator and his father came to visit him, his older sister shouted, “Give Ryo his life back! Make him whole again—I’ll make you suffer this pain for the rest of your life!” His father sent them away, saying, “If you have time to visit, go to work and bring some money!” And when the perpetrator’s grandfather came to visit, his mother also sent him away, saying, “I don’t even want to see your face!” Then, a senior from his baseball team came to visit him with a pastor, and he heard the pastor speak about Jesus. As he listened, tears naturally welled up in his eyes, and he came to believe in Jesus Christ. From that moment on, numerous miracles occurred: he was able to undergo rehabilitation and return home, and his whole family began attending church together. Furthermore, he took and passed the high school equivalency exam, enrolled in Cyber University, and graduated in five years. His family, who had been filled with nothing but hatred and resentment, began to consider forgiving the perpetrator. They then invited the perpetrator and his family to come to church. Due to the emotional strain, the perpetrator had lost his hair despite his young age. His father also told us that he had considered taking his own life so that the insurance money could be used as compensation. They, too, began attending church, and through an introduction by Ryō’s father, the perpetrator’s father started working at the same workplace. The perpetrator and the victim’s father ended up working together as a result of the accident. My mother said, “It’s wrong to condemn someone and keep suing them. I want to end this trial as soon as possible,” and asked her lawyer to withdraw the lawsuit. The lawyer reportedly got angry, saying, “Are you out of your mind?!” However, the family followed the teachings of the Bible: “If anyone has a grievance against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” (Colossians 3:13) My mother felt guilty for having sent the perpetrator’s grandfather away, so when she apologized to him, he shed tears, exclaiming, “What a waste!” He was freed from the heavy burden he had been carrying and became a Christian. “If my family hadn’t believed in Christ, these miracles surely wouldn’t have happened. I truly felt the great love and power of God at work through forgiveness,” she says.

We, too, may find the circumstances unfolding before us to be less than pleasant.

However, let us believe that God is at work even in these situations. Therefore, let us invite Christ into every event. In the monastery, we make the sign of the cross over everything—over ourselves, over others, over our food, and over our work. Let us believe that everything that happens is in God's hands, and that if Christ is present there, He will surely turn everything to good.