

Last Week's Sermon Summary

『Born of the Spirit』 Pastor Takaaki Inoue

1 Corinthians 15:50-58, John 3:1-9

① 【How can I become like you?】

One night, an elderly man named Nicodemus—a member of the Pharisees and a high-ranking official—came to Jesus and said, “Rabbi (which means “Teacher”), we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one can perform the signs you do unless God is with him.” (v. 2)

Nicodemus had diligently kept the Law for a long time, from his youth until old age, yet he lacked both the power and the conviction to perform any signs. However, when he saw the signs Jesus performed, he realized that Jesus must be someone with a faith entirely different from their own—someone who had surely come from God. This shows just how astonished he was by Jesus. Unless one has truly kept the Law, one cannot realize the limitations of the Law or the limitations of human power. Luther, Paul, and others all earnestly kept the commandments. That is why they came to understand that people cannot be changed by the Law, nor can they be saved by it. Nicodemus went to Jesus because he wanted to know, “How can I become like you?” However, since those who were close to Jesus were subject to being ostracized by society, he came at night to avoid being seen by others. There are two types of Christian faith: those who believe by human power, and those who believe by the power of God. The faith of the Pharisees was based on human power. Even when they taught the Scriptures, they lacked conviction and authority, so they could not reach people’s hearts or change them.

Jesus, on the other hand, was different. He taught by the power of God, cast out demons, and healed the sick.

② 【What does “being born anew” mean?】 In response, Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” (verse 3). “To see the kingdom of God” means to see (or experience) the power of God. However, the man does not understand what it means to be born again. “How can a man be born when he is old?” he asks. “Can he enter his mother’s womb a second time and be born?” Jesus then rephrased His answer, saying, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit” (verse 5). “Born of water and the Spirit” refers to baptism. The Spirit here refers to the Holy Spirit.

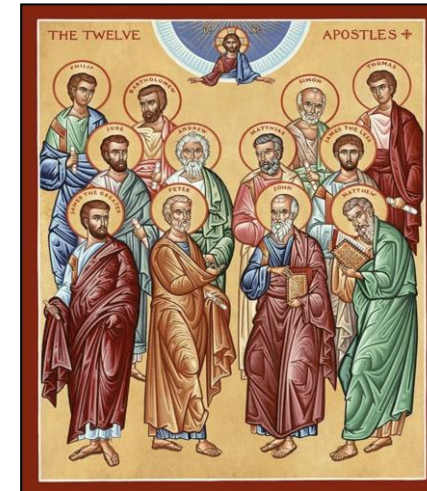
“Water” signifies “death,” and the “Holy Spirit” signifies “life.” In the Old Testament, water was an instrument of judgment. Both the Flood of Noah and the crossing of the Red Sea signify death. Since we cannot be buried in the ground, we bury our old selves in water. Unless we die to our old selves in this way, the Holy Spirit cannot work. Jesus was telling Nicodemus, “Unless you bury your old self, you cannot become a new person, nor can you experience the power of God.” It is a grave mistake to think that one can receive God’s glory without dying. Normally, as people age, they lose their vigor and give up on many things. Yet I am amazed that Nicodemus thought, “I want to be like Jesus.” This means that the “holy longing” within him did not fade even as he grew older. Nicodemus gives us courage. It shows that no matter how old a person becomes, there is always the possibility of change. ↗

Weekly Report

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Miyakojima Church

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《The Twelve Apostles》

Miyakojima Church's 2026 Mission Policy

Motto : " Let us become faithful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ "

Scripture : " Stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord will return." (Matthew 24:42)

Goals for FY2024

- 1 Observe worship services every week and aim for an average of 28 people to attend services.
- 2 I will make good use of my time to invite the people I meet to worship.
- 3 We don't just listen to the Word; we put it into practice.
- 4 Make concrete preparations for the construction of the church.