

“Not Building a Temporary Shelter” Pastor Takaaki Inoue

2 Peter 1:16–21, Matthew 17:1–8

❶ 【To Prepare for the True Seventh Day (Sabbath)】

Today I'd like to speak about the Transfiguration of Christ. In the Eastern Church, this is known as the “Feast of the Transfiguration” and is celebrated as a very important feast. I believe this event of the Transfiguration left a very strong impression on Peter's heart. This is because, in his letter, he writes not about his encounter with the risen Christ, but about this Transfiguration of Christ. “We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made the gospel known to you, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For a voice came to Him from the majestic glory, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’... We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven when we were with Jesus on the holy mountain.” (2 Peter 1:16–18)

Six days later, Jesus took only three of His disciples—Peter, James, and John—and went up a high mountain. Why does the text specify “six days later”? “Six days later” refers to the seventh day—that is, the Sabbath—the day on which God finished all His work and rested. It is written, “On the seventh day, God completed His work” (Genesis 2:2). The entire creation of heaven and earth was carried out with this seventh day in mind. This day is the culmination of the first through sixth days, and on this day, all things are completed. However, sin and death entered into humanity—created on the sixth day—and as a result, people died, and the world fell into ruin. Even if we observe the Sabbath while sin and death still exist, we cannot obtain true rest. Therefore, the seventh-day Sabbath was postponed. The seventh day of the Old Testament era was merely a foreshadowing of the true Sabbath. Therefore, Christ, the only Son of God, came to remove death and sin from this created world and to prepare the true “seventh day (Sabbath).” That day is Sunday. The Bible states: “So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For whoever enters God's rest also rests from their own works, just as God did from His.” (Hebrews 4:9) On this seventh day, Christ ascended the mountain, taking three disciples with Him to teach that the cross was necessary to remove sin and death from this world, and that a true Sabbath would be prepared for humanity thereafter. He took Peter with Him so that Peter might hear the Father's voice and confirm his confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi; He took James with Him to teach him the meaning of death, since James would be the first to be martyred; and He took John with Him so that John might write about Christ's divinity.

❷ 【The Meaning of Climbing a High Mountain】

There is a significance to the fact that the Lord went out of His way to climb high mountains (Mount Hermon, Mount Tabor) and was transfigured there. In the Bible, “climbing a mountain” signifies “drawing near to God” and represents a life of prayer and monastic devotion. The angels commanded Lot, who had remained on the plain, to “go up to the mountain.” The Psalms state, “Destruction is in the city” (Psalm 55:12).

Jesus always prayed on the mountains. That is why monasteries were built on mountaintops and cliffs. Furthermore, the mountaintop is the point where heaven and earth meet. This teaches us that Christ is the very place where heaven and earth meet—the place where God and humanity are united as one. There is a passage that says, “Pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). A holy life is a life of prayer and worship. When a person comes to church to pray, it is like climbing a mountain. Those who pray encounter God and are transformed into people who resemble Him. Let us climb the mountain of prayer with single-minded devotion.

③ [The Transfiguration of Christ = The Fulfilment of Our Salvation]

Verse 2 states, “Jesus’ appearance was transformed before their eyes; his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light.” This is called the “Transfiguration.” The fact that his colored clothes became as white as light and his face shone like the sun does not mean this was caused by the rays of the created sun. It was divine light, and Jesus revealed his true form—the radiance of his divinity. Moses could not see God’s face; he saw only His back. Yet his face still shone. Now the source of the light that had illuminated Moses has appeared. That is why Peter wrote about this event. Although it is not written that the resurrected Christ shone like the sun, He did shine at the time of the Transfiguration. But that is not all. Jesus infused the divine *energeia* into the humanity He had taken on, causing that humanity to shine. Let us realize that His humanity, too, shone like the sun. This is the very goal of our salvation, the purpose for which we were created, and our perfected state. This flesh was transformed and shone. Everything touched by divinity—whether flesh or clothing—shines. “And we all, with unveiled faces, reflecting the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, which is the work of the Lord’s Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18) “So that we may share in the divine nature.” (2 Peter 1:4)

Then Moses and Elijah appeared and were conversing with Jesus. (verse 3) Moses symbolizes the Law, and Elijah symbolizes the prophets. These two represent the entire Old Testament, teaching us that the Old Testament testifies to Jesus. Furthermore, the Church Fathers interpret this to mean that Moses represents the dead, while Elijah—having been taken up to heaven while still alive—represents the living, and Christ is the One who judges both the living and the dead. We can see that they are not dead but alive, because they are in fellowship with “Jesus, the Tree of Life,” and are listening to His words. Those who hear God’s word live.

④ [Instead of building a temporary shed]

Peter was moved by the glimpse of heaven he had seen, and he spoke up, saying, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will build three shelters here—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (verse 4) The original word for “shelters” is “tabernacle” or “tent.” The Lord said, “Peter, I understand that the sight you have seen is so wonderful that you want to linger in its memory forever. But even if you build shelters,

they will eventually decay. I did not come to build such temporary shelters. For me, a ‘temporary shelter’ is the flesh in which I was incarnated. I came to resurrect this flesh—this temporary shelter—and transform it into a glorious, powerful body, an imperishable temple of glory where God dwells. Therefore, you must not remain as you are now. Take up your cross and follow me.” Then a radiant cloud enveloped the disciples. The radiant cloud symbolizes the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Then the voice of God the Father was heard, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him” (verse 5). Here, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit appeared together. The disciples were greatly afraid, but Jesus approached them, touched them, and said, “Get up. Do not be afraid.”

●When I returned to my rural hometown in Nagano for the first time in a year, my 91-year-old mother looked incredibly frail. Her heart condition had weakened her physical functions and accelerated her aging. She can no longer walk outside as she used to. Her speech had slowed down dramatically. Even so, she continues to do housework at a leisurely pace inside the house. Aging and illness are the result of human sin; they were not part of God’s original plan. Neither aging nor illness is part of humanity’s true nature; they are sad realities. I believe we must not grow accustomed to them. The topic came up that one of my mother’s classmates was hospitalized with terminal cancer and didn’t have much time left. My mother said, “At my age, death isn’t all that sad,” but she also said, “I’ve never even thought about the afterlife.” So I spent a little time talking to her about the Christian concept of resurrection. However, she didn’t seem to believe it right away and listened with an expression that seemed to say, “I wonder if that’s even possible.”

When people of this world face death, they have no hope. This is because they believe this world is everything, and leaving it means losing everything. But it is not so for Christians. We believe this world is merely a preparation, and the next life is the main event. This is because we know that in the world to come, we will be transformed into the likeness of Christ and given a body that shines with glory—a strong body that will never decay, weaken, or grow old, and that will never die.

Today, the Lord says to us, “Arise. Do not be afraid.” In this world, arise in faith. Do not fear death. In the life to come, we will hear the same: “Arise; do not be afraid.” It is through these words that I will be resurrected. I, who am dust and ashes, will once again become flesh through Christ’s word and come back to life. The very same fingers that formed me will touch me, and I will be made into a better person. Let us lift up our eyes. There is no one but Jesus. Let us place our hope in His cross and resurrection.