Sunday, September 20, 2026　Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

"The Book of Life"　Pastor Takaaki Inoue
Revelation 20:11–15, Luke 10:17–24

❶【Your name is written in the Book of Life】

The 72 disciples, having returned from their mission, reported joyfully, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name." In response, Jesus said, "Do not rejoice that the demons submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20). The phrase "your names are written in heaven" refers to the scroll called the "Book of Life" that is in God's possession. This "Book of Life" appears many times in the Bible. Moses prayed, "If the sins of the people of Israel are not forgiven, 'please blot me out of the book in which you have written my name." (Exodus 32:32); the author of the Psalms prayed, "Blot them out of the Book of Life" (Psalm 69:29); and in today's reading, it is written, "Anyone whose name was not found written in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). The Book of Life is like a register of those who may enter the Kingdom of God.

●Reading this reminds me of the movie *Schindler's List*. Schindler, who ran a munitions factory, hired 1,200 Jews as workers and saved them from the extermination camps. Chiune Sugihara (an Orthodox Christian), a Japanese diplomat in Lithuania, also issued visas to approximately 6,000 people to save Jewish refugees. During the war, whether or not a person's name appeared on a list determined whether they lived or died.

We may not be particularly interested or moved when we hear that our names are written in the Book of Life. Yet this is the book that determines our eternal destiny. Just as Schindler and Chiune Sugihara defied orders and risked their own lives to save Jews, remember that it is through Christ's shed blood and sacrifice that your name has been written in the Book of Life. We must not boast in what we have done, but in what God—Christ—has done for us. "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31). Pastor Sukenari Iwamoto, who served as president of a Christian junior college, always used to say, "Glory to Christ, shame to us."

❷【Only the chosen few can know God】

"At that time, Jesus, filled with joy through the Holy Spirit, said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.' (verse 21) 'These things' likely refer to the identity of Jesus. The passage tells us that this was revealed not to the scholars of this world, but to those who are like little children. Those who are like little children are those who truly know that they are small, weak, and powerless.

"All things have been handed over to me by the Father. No one knows who the Son is

except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (verse 22) Only God the Father knows who Jesus is. Likewise, no one other than Jesus knows God the Father. This is because Jesus is God of the same essence as the Father and is the only-begotten Son of God the Father, born before all things were created. A created being cannot know the Creator, and one who was created within time cannot know the Eternal One. Those who are less than God cannot know God. We come to know the same through the same. Therefore, there is no one other than Jesus who can teach us about God the Father. Furthermore, since it is written, "No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him," the only people who can know God the Father are those whom Jesus decided, "I will reveal the Father to this person." It is not everyone. It is impossible to know God by human effort alone. Paul also says this: "For since in the wisdom of God the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21).

●After I left the Unification Church, there were several young people who eagerly participated in church gatherings and events and helped out. They were earnest and very sincere. However, eventually they left the church. That was because Jesus had not chosen them. Faith cannot be sustained or achieved through human zeal alone. One comes to understand that faith is not a work of man, but a matter of being chosen.

We came to know God because Jesus wanted to "show you the Father." That is a joyful thing. As long as I remain like a little child, Jesus will continue to teach me more about God. God does not reveal His presence and secrets to just anyone. If He were to reveal Himself to the proud, they would bite Him. "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6). God reveals Himself to the humble and teaches them.

❸【Placing Our Hope in God the Christ and the Kingdom of God】

"Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said to them alone, 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. I tell you, many prophets and kings longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.'" (verses 23–24)

Jesus' disciples—as well as the Jews and the Romans—saw God incarnate with their own eyes. Yet their eyes were veiled, and they did not realize that God was right before them. In the Old Testament era, people feared hearing God's words directly. But the disciples heard the words coming from God's own mouth with their own ears. Yet they did not realize it; they took it lightly and soon forgot it. It is not simply that people can change when the real thing appears. It is because human beings lack the ability to distinguish between the real and the fake. Oh, how blind and deaf people have become! Isaiah prophesied this, saying, "You will hear but never understand; you will see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes are closed" (Matthew 13:14–15). Do we truly believe that coming to

church to look up to and worship Jesus, to hear God's Word and the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, and to partake of the Body of Christ is our greatest happiness? Are your eyes and ears truly open? I pray that they may be opened.
It seems that believers today are thinking only of the things of this world, rather than the Kingdom of God. And they are constantly fretting over the things of this world. We must clearly understand the true nature of this world. As we sing in hymns, this world is a "world of deception." Originally, it was a good thing created by God, but death entered through human sin, and this world fell into ruin. It is said that the world's largest glacier, located in the Jungfrau region of Switzerland, will completely melt away by the year 2100 due to global warming. This world will continue to grow worse and fall into ruin. People ask, "Why does God, who is a God of love, allow so many people to die in disasters? If God rules the world, why do wars never end?" This is foolish. It is because God gave humans free will and granted them the authority to rule this world. Did God not say, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it… and have dominion over every living thing"? " (Genesis 1:28), did God not say? This world is one in which both God's will and human will are at work; it is a world in which both God's rule and human rule are at work. God rules with love, but humans rule through sin. Humans do not obey God, nor do they submit to His rule. Many people fall victim to human sin. We must not blame everything on God. God is without fault. The fault lies entirely with humans. Therefore, we must not place our hope in this world. This is because this world is passing away and is imperfect. Even as people of faith, we must be prepared for anything to happen in this world. There are those who misunderstand Christianity. Faith is not about this world, but about seeking a reward in the world to come.

●Motokichirō Ōsaka wrote the following: "We are all too prone to think that since God will take care of the afterlife somehow, we need only focus on this present life—but this is a terrifying notion. This present life is a place of preparation for the afterlife." "The church stands on the foundation of proclaiming both the final judgment and the hope of the end times. The church must remain consistent in fulfilling this mission. …If the church does not consider the end times but focuses only on immediate, worldly concerns, it loses its meaning. The phrase 'Thy kingdom come' in the Lord's Prayer is a prayer for the coming of the end times. …It is precisely because the Kingdom to come exists that we lead our temporary church life here on earth."

It is to place our hope in God and the Kingdom of God. No matter how old a person is, they can always start over. Even if you have to start from scratch, as long as you have Christ, you can begin anew. This church, too, was at zero when I arrived, but because Christ was with us, it was made abundant. For as long as we have Christ, new life is born. Christ overcomes both sin and death. Even if we cannot trust what people do, let us believe in what Christ has promised and what Christ has begun. May glory always be to Christ, the Father, and the Holy Spirit.