Sunday, October 18, 2026　Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

"The Dangers of Vacant Homes"　Pastor Takaaki Inoue
1 Corinthians 3:10–13, 16–17; Luke 11:20–26

❶【Why Christ Casts Out Demons】

Today, I'd like to begin by sharing the story of Jesus casting out a demon. In this passage, Jesus cast out a demon that had rendered a man mute, thereby healing him. He said, "If I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:19). When a demon controls a person, that person becomes the demon's tool. However, when Christ casts out the evil spirit and takes control of that person, that person becomes an instrument of God. This is because Christ is stronger than the evil spirit. Jesus referred to His own finger as "the finger of God." No one but God can cast out evil spirits. Since Jesus is God, He casts out evil spirits by the power of God.

Three main aspects of Jesus' ministry can be identified: "proclaiming the Kingdom of God," "casting out evil spirits," and "healing the sick." Since we are familiar with the Bible, we don't question Jesus' healing of the sick all that much, but I have been asked by someone reading the Bible for the first time, "Why did Jesus heal the sick?" Why did Jesus cast out demons and heal the sick? Was it because He had compassion on those suffering from illness? That is part of it, but above all, He cast out demons because they hinder people from believing in God. Evil spirits will do anything—even disguise themselves as angels—to separate us from God. They try to make us think that this world is more appealing than God, that idols other than God (the god of this world, people, money, knowledge, and the world itself) might save us, and they try to make us seek those things. But it's all a lie. That's because the devil is always a liar.

"The god of this world (that is, the evil spirit) has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that reveals the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:4) When an evil spirit leaves, the Holy Spirit enters, and thus the Kingdom of God is established in that person's heart, and they awaken from the lies. And the Holy Spirit teaches us about the true God. This world cannot believe in God through its own wisdom. Without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to believe in Christ, nor can one know God.

❷【Those who squander God's grace will become worse and worse】

Verses 24 and following describe what happens after the evil spirit has left. "When an unclean spirit comes out of a person, it wanders through the desert, looking for a place to rest but finding none. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I came from.' And when it returns, it finds the house swept clean and put in order." (Luke 11:24–25) It is not enough simply to cast out an evil spirit. When an evil spirit leaves a person, it wanders through the desert. The desert—a place without water—symbolizes a soul without tears of repentance, a desolate soul. In other

words, it seeks a soul that will accept it. Even an evil spirit needs a person's consent. Just as iron and a magnet attract each other, when hatred, suspicion, resentment, hostility, jealousy, anger, anxiety, unbelief, and fear are present in a person's heart, the evil spirit can enter. Then, saying, "Let's go back to my house," it tries to return to the person it left. This is because that person's soul is still ingrained with bad habits and negative ways of thinking. When it returns, it finds that person's heart has been cleaned and put in order. This is because when an evil spirit leaves, the person's heart becomes pure and orderly. However, since the house is now empty, the spirit brings seven other spirits even worse than itself, enters, and takes up residence. As a result, the person's condition becomes even worse than before. A boat without a helmsman drifts endlessly on the sea; a house without an inhabitant falls into ruin; and a journey without a destination becomes a journey of wandering. The problem lies in the fact that the Master does not dwell in this person's heart. What happens after the evil spirit leaves is what matters most. We must return to the original state of humanity as God created us. This means becoming a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16) People are cleansed through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. However, that alone was not enough; the coming of the Holy Spirit was necessary. We must make an effort to ensure that God's Spirit continues to dwell within us. Many Christians fail to do this. They think that once they believe, it's over; once they are baptized, it's over.

●When I had my blood test in July, about three of my test results were abnormal. So I changed my diet, started eating more moderately, and began exercising. As a result, I lost 9 kilograms, which scared me, and I worried that I might have developed a more serious illness. However, by the time of my blood test in October, all my levels had returned to normal, and my fatty liver had cleared up. I gave thanks to God for restoring my health, and I resolved to use the life and health He has given me for the sake of God and the church.

The purpose of being granted health, healed of illness, and delivered from evil spirits is not so that we may become healthy and do whatever we please, nor so that we may do evil, but so that we may offer the body and life we have been given as instruments of God and allow Him to use them. Grace is not something to be taken for granted. If we squander the grace we have been given, we will lose it, and even worse things will befall us.

Hezekiah, king of Judah, was a king who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but he contracted a severe skin disease and was near death. However, because he wept and prayed to God, his illness was healed, and his life was extended by 15 years. Yet he became arrogant and refused to accept Isaiah's warning, saying, "The word of the Lord that you have spoken is good." (Isaiah 39:8, Contemporary Translation). Because he disregarded and refused to heed

God's word spoken through the prophet, all his treasures were plundered by Babylon. He had squandered the grace he had received. Likewise, the sick man who had suffered from his illness for 38 years and lay by the Pool of Bethesda—after Jesus healed him—was warned by Jesus, "You are well now. Do not sin anymore, Otherwise, something worse might happen to you" (John 5:14), yet he walked away from Jesus and sided with the Jews. As a result, Jesus began to face persecution. He, too, squandered the grace of his healing. Those who disregard God's grace will face even harsher punishment, for otherwise they will not repent.

❸【Living a Life Directly Aimed at God】

Mitsuo Aida wrote the following:

> ● "One sun, one thousand kan"—that's a saying I once heard from a carpenter. One sun is 3.3 centimeters. They say that even a slender pillar just one sun square in cross-section can support a weight of one thousand kan (3,750 kilograms). That is, as long as it's perfectly straight… What he meant to convey, using the thin pillar as a metaphor, was that the more upright a person's fundamental posture in life is, the stronger they are. …Conversely, even if a pillar is three or five times as thick, if it is used at an angle or bent into a "k" shape, it cannot withstand the weight over the long term and will snap. In zazen, great emphasis is placed on "zaso"—the sitting posture. The character "so" in zaso refers to form or shape. The ideal sitting posture is one in which the body is straight from the waist to the top of the head. When you sit straight, you don't get tired, your breathing remains steady, and you can endure long periods of zazen. …Maintaining the correct fundamental posture in life means not turning this way and that, or wavering back and forth.

No matter how much good health one may be granted, no matter how skilled one may be in worldly calculations, how intelligent, or how many abilities one may possess—in other words, even if one were as thick as a pillar three or five times the normal size—if one's heart and way of life are not directed straight toward God, that person will inevitably break. This is because the fundamental attitude for human beings is to place God at the center of one's life and to live for the Kingdom of God and for God Himself.

Is your way of life straight and true? Or are you wavering? If you listen to God today and to the world tomorrow—if you go to church for prayer today because you feel like it, but skip it tomorrow because you don't—then you are leading a wavering spiritual life. When will your way of life ever become steadfast? Chesterton said, "You might think that if you don't believe in God, you won't believe in anything—but the opposite is true: you end up believing in everything." Anyone who does not make Christ their Master will end up making anyone else their master. Whether in worship, prayer, service, or giving, people do things as they see fit. And for those who make wavering decisions from the start, this

becomes a bad habit that shapes the course of their lives. Those who firmly embrace the lifestyle of the Kingdom of God will receive a rich reward in the Kingdom of God. This brings to mind the words of the Psalms: "Blessed is the one who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers." (Psalm 1:2–3) May we believe in Christ's words wholeheartedly and cultivate the habits of a faithful life that leads us straight toward the Kingdom of God.