

## Last Week's Sermon Summary

### 「Enter Through the Narrow Gate」

Pastor Takaaki Inoue

Acts 20:18-24, Luke 13:22-30

#### ❶ 【Entering Through the Narrow Gate】

As Jesus was teaching, He was making His way toward Jerusalem. Someone asked Him, "Lord, are there only a few who will be saved?" (Luke 13:23). Jesus replied, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate. I tell you, many will try to enter and will not be able to." (Luke 13:24). "Making His way toward Jerusalem" means making His way toward the cross. The cross means suffering, enduring shame, being defeated, suffering loss, denying oneself, and letting go of one's desires. Meanwhile, the disciples and the crowd never imagined that they were heading toward death. They believed that in Jerusalem, joy, glory, victory, gain, acquisition, and the fulfillment of their wishes awaited them. Jesus' path and that of the disciples were diametrically opposed—as far apart as heaven and earth.

What does it mean to "enter through the narrow gate"? In the Gospel of Matthew, it is written: "Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate that leads to destruction is wide, and the road is broad, and many enter through it. But how narrow is the gate that leads to life, and how narrow is the road! Few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). The "narrow entrance" and the "narrow gate" mean the same thing. That narrow gate is the gate leading into the Kingdom of Heaven. To pass through that narrow gate, you must humble yourself. This means adopting a humble attitude of acknowledging your own sins. Furthermore, the narrow path can only be traversed by one person at a time. Each person stands alone before God. Life will end while you are blaming those around you for your misfortunes and joining your

peers in speaking ill of others. You must examine your own sins and pray to God. That, too, is a solitary path. You must not do something simply because others are doing it; rather, even if no one else is doing it, if Christ says, "Do this!" then you must do it. Even if everyone else is doing it, if Christ says, "Do not do this!" then you must not do it. You must not look to the side (at others), but live your life looking up to Christ. Since the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven is shaped like Christ, you cannot enter the Kingdom unless you conform to it. The narrow gate is, in fact, Christ Himself. Therefore, you must not try to make Christ conform to you; rather, you must conform yourself to Christ's way of life.

❷ 【"I do not know where you come from."】 The time will come when the gates of heaven will eventually close. Even if you stand outside, knock on the door, and say, "Master, open the door for us. We ate and drank with you, and we received your teachings," you will be told, "I do not know where you come from" (Luke 13:27), and you will not be allowed to enter heaven. These people who cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven call Jesus "Lord," have eaten with Him, and have heard His teachings—so it is clear they are Christians. There are others who heard the exact same words: "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" (Matthew 7:22), but Christ replied, "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:23). This is because, no matter how many great deeds or miracles they performed in Jesus' name, they did not heed God's will but acted selfishly. In other words, they did not make Christ their master; they made themselves their own masters. It does not matter how zealous they were. People tend to become zealous when it comes to getting what they want. The way we live is the same both on earth and in heaven. ↗

# Weekly Report

## The United Church of Christ in Japan Miyakojima Church

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《The Creation of Heaven and Earth》

## 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.