

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
November 4, 2018

The Lamb Who Was Slain
Revelation 5:6-12

5:6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

5:7 And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

5:8 And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

5:9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

5:10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

5:11 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,

5:12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

1. Suffering and Glory of Christ

Philippians 2:6-11 says, "Though he (Christ) was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made

himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” This is a hymn that was actually sung in the early Church, the first half sings the suffering of Christ and the second half praises His glory. It can be said that the glory of Christ is sung among the hymn that sings Christ's suffering.

There are praises to Christ in Revelation Chapter 5. Verses 9 and 10 sing, “And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” Verse 12 also sings, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” Such hymn would have been actually sung at the worship service of the early Church. A lot of songs have been sung and composed to praise Jesus by calling Him the “Lamb” until now. The praise to the “Lamb” were already in the early Church.

In Revelation, Christ is described glorious King of victory. And yet Christ is called “the slaughtered lamb.” The suffering of Christ is sung in the praise honoring His glory. The Bible finds the glory in the suffering of Christ, and finds the suffering in the glory. It teaches us

that Christ's suffering and glory can not be separated.

After the resurrection, Lord Jesus showed His scars of nail and spear of the cross to His disciples. In His resurrected body, the body of glory, the scars of suffering are still there. When we can see the Lord one day in heaven, we will be able to see that scars. And when we see them, we will be thankful for shedding tears that they were for our salvation. Also, the early Church kept the Lord's Supper, in which we remember His death, on Sundays. They remembered the death of Christ on the day of celebrating the resurrection of Christ.

In the past, a famous evangelist said, "Because the message of the cross is dark and stumbles, it is better to talk about the resurrection of Christ." But if we do like that, no one will be saved. There is no way for us to be saved without a cross. Besides, without the cross, there is no resurrection. Those who do not listen to the message of the cross will not hear the message of the resurrection. And the message of the resurrection without the cross is only a reminiscent of the sports "loser recovery game" and egg hunt. Romans 4:25 said, "(Christ) was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." It is clearly written that people will be saved with the cross and the resurrection. We are saved and live by this truth. Therefore, at any time, we tell people the cross and the resurrection.

2. Our Suffering and Glory

The cross of Christ is for our sins. In the time of the Old Testament, people offered the sacrifice animals to the alters and asked for forgiveness. The animals took over the sins of human beings and died for them. The most popular animal among the sacrifice ones was a

lamb. Jesus Christ is called the “Lamb” because his death on the cross was for the substitution for sinners. It was not the consequence of the religious problems in Judea or the political conflicts in the Roman empire. His death was not an “unfortunate incident.” He died for forgiveness of our sins, and for sanctification from sins. It was the death for our redemption. Christ has been called “Lamb” because it indicates this fact.

When you believed in Jesus Christ, did you become free from any sufferings? No. No sufferings cannot set apart the believer from Christ. But, the true believers are called to participate with the suffering of Christ and for Christ’s sake. According to Paul, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22) In Romans 8:17, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” Christ Himself went through the hardship to receive the glory so that we, as followers of Jesus Christ, shall follow his pathway. The suffering that Christ went through never be short of saving human beings. We don’t need to add anything to the suffering of Christ. However, the Bible teaches us to go through the suffering with Christ and offer ourselves as sacrifice.

However, this is not even understood among Christians because the concept of the “Salvation” is misunderstood. The leading pastors in the U.S. say that many American churches seek only for “Feel Good” matters. American people think that God should please people, Christ have to comfort people, and the Holy Spirit is to encourage people. The pastors warn that the people tend to extract what is good to them

from the Bible and don't understand the truth. The message of forgiveness by Christ is a precious Good News. But it does not mean that we are released from the sense of guilty and don't need to think about "sins" which make us sad. The Gospel is not a psychological message. If we seek only for "Feel Good," it becomes wrong that we seek repentance and the forgiveness of our sins and the sanctification from our sins. Is it the salvation that we don't feel guilty when we commit sins? No! It is totally opposite. We shall remember our sins and powerlessness, and ask the forgiveness and sanctification given by the blood of the "Lamb," Christ. Therefore we always trust and obey Him.

I got to know this real story through the news from Japan. On August 12th, a criminal suspect, escaped from the detention center of the Osaka Tondabayashi Police Office, Osaka. He pretended to be one of the cyclists and went to Yamaguchi prefecture; however, he was caught on September 29th. Was it his "salvation" that he could escape from the detention center? Did he live freely for those 49 days? And did he live happily? No. he believed that he was free; however, he became a slave of fear, he always has been scared for the arrest by police. The true salvation to him was receiving the sentence for his crime, making up for it, converting his mind, and renewing his life style. The "salvation" is not running away from things you don't want. It is walking away from the dark side and the hopeless world to the light and hopeful world. And Jesus Christ saves you.

3. Sacrifice and Reward

We, who are saved, therefore, worship and give thanks to the Lamb

Jesus, give ourselves as the sacrifice to God like Jesus did. To give our time and best efforts to testify and tell the gospel of Christ. We may fail to do it or do imperfectly sometimes. A variety of things will prevent us from give ourselves. We, sometimes, put our own things first, and seek our own comfort. We may be afraid of mistakes, saying, “If I cannot do this well....”

I think that one of the biggest reasons of keep us away from the joy of giving ourselves as the sacrifice is “disappointment.” It is disappointment that we say, “I am sacrificed so much but I can not pay back anything.” Although saying "reward" does not mean expecting rewards to return to myself. Even though you spend your time and communicating the gospel with your heart in mind, when you do not believe or ask for it, it makes me feel like I'm done with labor. More than anything, I feel sad when I think of the future of those who keep my mind close to the gospel. That is disappointment.

The Bible says, “Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!” (Psalm 126:5) and “Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9) It teaches us that we will reap what we sowed.” Let me share another real story regarding this.

Do you know the person, Mitsuo Fuchida? He was a former Navy Colonel who later became a Christian and became an evangelist. Mr. Fuchida was saved through his soldier. When the soldier was released from the prisoners' war life in the United States and returned home, Mr. Fuchida sympathized with him and said, “You became a captive and surely received seriously?” But that person replied, “No, there was nothing like that, although we were enemies, we were treated

very generously. In particular, one beautiful American woman who worked at that prison camp was so kind and gently to us. I thought wondering and asked her why she did so. She told me like this.

“My father, Jim Covell, has become a missionary to Japan in 1919. When Japan became militaristic, he was pursued Japan in 1939 and moved to the mountain back of Panay in Philippines with other missionaries. However, the Japanese army came to catch missionaries. As women and children were caught by the Japanese army, my father went to the Japanese army with the other ten missionaries and said, “We are not combatants, both in Japan and the United States we did not intend to be responsible for either.” They explained to the Japanese army, but the answer of the Japanese army was “We’ll kill you because it is an order.” The Japanese army just repeated the same words. Eventually, both my father and other missionaries were killed. I volunteered for the service of the Japanese prisoner of war camp, thinking so I would like to do as much as I can for the Japanese people who my beloved parents loved so much.”

Until then, Mr. Fuchida had thought only of revenge to the United States. Then he was shocked and asked the soldier, “How could she do that?” He handed a copy of the Bible to Mr. Fuchida and said, “This is the answer, I am also a Christian through the living testimony of Peggy, a daughter of missionary Covell. Mr. Fuchida also became a Christian.

The martyrdom of missionary Covell was published in the booklet “Through Glorious Triumphal Arch” in the United States. The booklet says, “Someone of the Japanese who murdered the missionaries will come to believe in Christ through their death one day.” Through the

sacrifice offered by Covell and other missionaries, one captive was saved. And Mr. Fuchida was saved through him. Then many people were saved through Mr. Fuchida. People thought that the sacrifice of missionary Covell was useless at that time. But it has brought a big fruit. God, who did not waste the sacrifice of the Lamb Jesus, never wastes the sacrifice of those who obey the Lamb Jesus.

(Prayer)

God, the Father, I thank you that Christ has become a lamb of sacrifice and died on the cross for us. You are about to represent the sacrifice of the Lamb who was slain for us through the Lord's Supper. Allow us to deeply meditate the suffering in the glory of the Lamb Jesus with the saints in Heaven. And help us to see the glory in the sufferings of our life. We pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus.