

Redemption of Being

Peter

In the headquarters of our church we have service led by a staff worker. It is a kind of rehearsal for those who have seldom delivered messages in public, and other staff workers give advice and comments. Yet, no one considers it as mere practice. We worship the Lord just as seriously as in the Sunday service. Every message is meaningful as long as we speak before the Lord. It is just worship whether at the Church or at a practice session.

The other day we had service led by Fumiko Shibuta, a regional staff worker in Shizuoka now having a practical training in the headquarters. I hear she used to be an ardent Christian like Simon called the Zealot, but now she is a person who simply rejoices in the love of the Lord and serenely speaks of the joy.

While listening to her, I was moved deeply. Throughout the service one word was coming to me: “Redemption of being.”

Fumiko had a younger sister who was very smart but fell mentally ill in her senior high school days. Mental illness received such social stigma and prejudice in those days that her sister’s illness caused great pain and sorrow to her entire family. Although she did not talk much about the grief, how agonizing it must have been for the family to take care of her!

However, Fumiko met Christ and was later led to the *Kohitsuji no Mure* Church, where she was healed deeply by the redemptive love of Christ. Then the love flowed to her mother and also to her sister. When their mother returned to heaven, her sister quietly accepted it, and said simply after the funeral, “I think it was the best for her, because Jesus has done so.” It was such a big change in her sister. Several years before, when their father had passed away, her sister had been so panicked at the funeral.

Fumiko was in awe. Her sister, whom she had seen as the source of anxiety and unhappiness for her family, was now so obediently accepting the love of the Lord. The love then flowed between the two sisters who had not even spoken to each other for a long time. “The Lord has made reconciliation between my sister and me,” she said.

Hearing her testimony, we too were moved by the redemptive love of Christ.

Reconciliation by the Lord is not like this: “You were mean, but I forgive you. So let’s get along from now on,” or “I was wrong, too. Please forgive me.” It may also be included, but Christ redeemed us with His own life. It is more than just for the forgiveness of what we have done or our deeds. The cross of Christ is the redemption of our whole being – the love that accepts our being just as we are. Reconciliation is the redemption of being itself.

Haven’t you ever grumbled, “Why do I have to live in such fate? Why me?” If there is God, why doesn’t He heal my sister? She now believes in Christ, so she should be healed not halfway but completely. I wish her to live just like a normal person and get married . . . Why doesn’t it come true?

It is the honest cry of man’s soul, but the honesty of the flesh. No matter how honest you are in the flesh, you will only remain in the flesh. No matter how hard you seek an answer in the flesh, you will find no life, but rather fall into emptiness.

Receive the redemptive love of Christ. Then you will find yourself no longer asking “Why?” because your intellectual and emotional doubts disappear. So does the hostility of your soul. In the redemption of Christ the divine life and love of God overflow abundantly. All man’s sorrow and darkness are exposed in the light, and whatever is exposed becomes the light.

It is well, for everything is in the love of God. Nothing is a coincidence, and nothing is wasted.

Make no mistake. The redemptive love of Christ will never paralyze your soul nor deprive your ability to make judgment. Once you know that your whole being has been redeemed by Christ, you cease to grumble your complaints. You will confess to the Lord like Job, a person in anguish in the Old Testament, “I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee.” (Job 42:5 RSV) He then continued, “Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:6) O, Job, you no longer need to blame yourself. There is nothing to regret. You lost your family, fortune and fame. Moreover, staid people blamed you for being proud. Your life was full of disappointments and hardships, but now your eyes were opened to see the truth.

The love of God accepts us just as we are. Nothing needs to be added to nor taken away from the book of life. (Revelation 22:18-19) This is the truth of love – and the real life.

What exist are God and my love for Him alone.

This is the redemption of our being by Christ.

I have left the world of comparison and entered the world of absolute love. I no longer have to compare myself with others. I can be just as I am. There is nothing to be added nor taken away. I rejoice in God as I am. The joy in God is such a reality for me.

While listening to Fumiko's testimony, I was remembering the testimony of another staff worker, Makiko Akashima. One day when she returned home from school, she found her mother a completely different person. She became victimized by mental illness. Immediately her mother was hospitalized, and the doctor said that her illness would be incurable for the rest of her life. She had to spend years at the hospital. Strangely enough, however, after Makiko came to Christ, her mother got better.

Makiko's mother was allowed to be away from the hospital on a few special occasions. Whenever she returned home to spend New Year's Day with the family, she wanted to buy Japanese traditional New Year decorations which originally came from the Shinto religion. However, one year when she returned home for New Year's Holidays, she did not ask for anything. "Why?" asked Makiko. "Because I believe in Jesus Christ. Only Jesus can give life to the dead," replied her mother, which surprised her.

Having stayed in the hospital for twenty years, her mother was diagnosed well enough to be discharged, and started to live with the family of Makiko's sister. Then, she voluntarily began to reduce the amount of her large daily dose of medicines little by little, and finally stopped taking them completely.

I am overwhelmed with the mystery of redemption. It does not matter whether or not she can really come back to a normal life according to the worldly common sense. The common sense only knows the world of comparison, but the love of God is absolute. What exist are God and my love for Him.

Even falling in mental illness is now in the light of Christ. This is the redemption.

March 25, 2007