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John 20: 19-29

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The resurrected Jesus is my Lord! My God!

Happy Easter!! Jesus is resurrected! Hallelujah!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most celebrating event in Christianity. Looking at Acts 1:22, the important work of the apostles was to testify to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul said, 1 Corinthians 15: 1-5, the gospel is Jesus Christ died for our sins, as the Bible shows, and was buried. It is said that it was resurrected on the third day as the Bible shows. Also Christian evangelism is to testify to this cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The first time I heard the gospel of the cross and the resurrection, I had a life-changing experience. The world I've been looking at looks different. I was full of joy when I realized that I was forgiven and loved by God. However, after living a turbulent life for a while, I realized that I was not impressed as I was in the past when I first met Jesus. So it was a little bit difficult to prepare today's message. How about everyone? Is there a daily joy of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ in you? Through today's message, I pray that all of us will be full of the joy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Today's text is about of the famous disciple Thomas. This is the story of Jesus who kindly appeared again for Thomas, who wasn't there when everyone was there. First of all, I would like to focus that Jesus declared "Peace be with you" three times. We can understand the word is like; You may have peace. You can be always at peace. Peace generally reminds us of a calm state without conflict. Of course, peace in the Bible has such a meaning, but this is a passive concept. Peace in the Bible has a more positive meaning (Old Testament Theological Dictionary, p399, Shinkyō Shuppansha, 2004).

This positive and active peace is that God himself has begun reconciliation with sinners. See Ephesians 2: 14-17. "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace

to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.” Because we are sinners who made barrier to God, we could not approach to God .Therefore, we were hostile to God, judged, and eventually died. That was not only to mention physical death, but also an eternal death. However, God gave us eternal life through Jesus Christ. John 3:16,

" For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." God has shown his love for us through the cross and the resurrection of Jesus (Romans 5: 8). God has actively achieved reconciliation with us.

1 Corinthians Chapter 15 teaches about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and its relevance to us. Resurrection of Jesus Christ became the firstfruits for our resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20). Therefore, we who believe in Jesus Christ will be resurrected to a glorious figure, just like Jesus. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, the God of Peace Himself makes us perfectly holy. And when the kingdom of God comes to this world by Jesus Christ, we will rule the kingdom of God with Jesus Christ. This is a great hope. Paul states in Romans 5: 2 that we Christians hope this glory of God and even are pleased in the tribulation and suffering.

In November 2019, shortly before the Covid-19 spread, Marian, the wife of the assistant pastor of the Tokyo Baptist Church where I am attending, passed away after a long fight against cancer. I was sad because she was a still young in early 40s. She was the teacher of Kenta and Taishi at Sunday school, so they left school early and participated in the farewell worship. However, the farewell worship at the church was completely different from the general funeral. The praise team were making beautiful sounds with electric guitar, drums and keyboard. A worship leader was singing the victory of Jesus brightly. Suddenly Kenta asked me, "Mom, is funeral like this okay?" To be honest, I was surprised too, but I thought that I had to say the correct answer to him. "Kenta, Christian's death is the beginning of winning the world and being with Jesus in the heaven, so it's the happiest moment to us." After that, during the farewell service some her friends were crying because of loneliness for not being able to see her for a while rather than sadness of death, eternal separation. The greetings of the bereaved family were also bright! Bright ! "Marian! You did a good work! Fighting illness was hard, but well done!" The words of this bereaved family reminded me of Jesus who wiped our tears on earth, when we go to the heaven (Revelation 7:17, 21: 4). I heard later that this farewell worship was very moving and impressed non-Christians as well. It was an unforgettable event for me and my children also.

The Bible teaches that happiness in this world is not everything, but that there is an invisible spiritual world. Unreasonable things such as illness, crime, and natural disasters occur in this world because Satan is still active in this world. But what we must remember is the truth that Jesus Christ has already won and surpassed the world through the resurrection, no matter how strong the power of death may seem. When we face hardships and become depressed or suffering, we miss this core of truth. It's easy to get the illusion that the good God is losing. But at this time we should remember the victory of Jesus Christ. And we can scold death like the apostle Paul. "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting! (1 Corinthians 15:55)" We suffer in this world because of the thorns of death. But death died (1 Corinthians 15:26). In this world, Jesus won through the cross and the resurrection as promised in the Bible 2,000 years ago. However, Jesus has defeated the world. John 16:33, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." And John 11:25, 26, "Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" You just have to accept this truth with faith. I pray that all of us will be believers in Jesus Christ, the resurrection and life.

With the above contents, we knew that we became peaceful with God, and eventually we also transformed into glorious bodies, and we were able to have the hope of governing the kingdom of God and the kingdom of peace of God. So how should we live this peace in this world? With having this hope of peace, we should carry out peace from God here and now. In today's text, Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" It is us those who believe without seeing. Then so why are we happy? It is thanks to this word that Jesus breathed into his disciples in verse 22, "Receive the Holy Spirit." By receiving the Holy Spirit, we can believe without seeing Jesus and furthermore we are praised by Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of Christ. According to 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." Therefore, without any limit, in space and time, we can freely have a relationship with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. Romans 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." Through the Holy Spirit, peace and joy overflow in the hearts of each of us. The kingdom of peace of God will be built in our hearts.

I like Thomas' faith very much. At first, his faith is not passive just to receive from others, but Thomas's faith is a practical confirmation of reality. Of course, it is good that we can listen to the testimonies of many Christians, but it is more than important to know God experientially, such as by seeing it with our eyes and touching it with our hands, as in Psalm 34: 8. When we have this lively experience, we can confess Jesus Christ as 'My Lord! and My God!', like Thomas. Please pray that all of us can confess the resurrected Jesus as "My Lord! My God!"

So what is happening to the resurrected Jesus now? For the past year, we have been learning Revelation with Pastor Neufeld. In the Revelation, Jesus is sitting on the throne of heaven, and all things are bowing before Jesus (Revelation chapters 20 and 21). The glorious figure of Jesus is the figure of God, the Lord and the King of Kings. Hallelujah! However, when this Jesus sees Revelation 3:20, we realize Jesus is very close to us. "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Is that glorious Jesus Christ knocking on the door of our apartment? I'm surprised at this gap between Jesus is the King of Kings and the person who loves us. However, since this is said in the Bible, that resurrected Jesus is knocking now on the door of Mrs. Greta's house beside Niagara Falls. Jesus our Lord is also knocking on the door of Mrs. Kanamaru in Hitachi City, Ibaraki Prefecture. This shows us Jesus' love. Jesus wants to have lunch with us now. Knock Knock! Ton ton! Jesus is waiting for us every day to open it.

6 months ago, I realized that I haven't sincerely invited Jesus, who is knocking on the door of my heart, for a long time. I remember having a meal with Jesus a long time ago, but I realized that I don't have it now. I was always chanting my wishes when I am praying. I just wished that I could solve various problems by Jesus. It was as if I was collecting debt from Jesus. I had never invited him to the house of my heart around this time. At that time, I said humbly to Jesus. "Jesus, please enter my heart. I'm very sorry to have kept You outside for a long time." I'm sorry to have made Jesus feel lonely until now. It was a repentance after a long term without having relationship with Jesus and I cried naturally. And the Holy Spirit reminded me of my sins so far. I sincerely repented of myself, who had been complaining without thanking God for more than 10 years. I forgot the love of Jesus who died for me, and I forgot Jesus' victory who was resurrected and defeated death on the third day. Paul confessed, Romans 8: 34-35, "Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-more than that, who was raised to life -is at the right hand God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? When I looked at my environment, I was often afraid because of all troubles, but I realized that these trials could not separate me from the love of Jesus Christ. Since then, I have spent time more with Jesus than before. I read the Bible, praise and pray. Then I spend my times preparing for the message and study of the Romans in the Bible. Last week, when my eldest son, Kenta hurt his ligaments, if I was still in the past, I might have slept for days, but this time I was able to recover relatively quickly.^^ Because I was practicing to invite Jesus to my life and talk with Him about my problems. Then, around this time, I realized that peace from Jesus had long dominated my heart. Romans 5: 1, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We live side by side with death every day. We can't go out and meet friends because we are afraid of the spread of the Covid-19. In particular, Japan is next to death every day due to natural disaster such as earthquakes and tsunamis. And some brothers and sisters are actually having a hard time fighting against illness. And some brothers and sisters also suffer from menopause and depression. These days, because of Covid-19 makes it difficult to go on to school or get a job. Someone has also difficulties raising children who continue to cause problems. These various problems and trials will not disappear as long as we live on this earth. However, when we can confess that the resurrected Jesus Christ is my Lord, my God, we will win the world like Jesus. And we will receive eternal life and be full of peace and joy in our daily life.

Finally, let's call your name and declare it together.

I will say that the resurrected Jesus! And everyone please say like this,

"Yoko's Lord! Yoko's God!" Please put your name on the lines.

The resurrected Jesus is Lord! God! Amen!

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I thank you that we have been forgiven for reconciling with us through Jesus Christ. And I thank you for this grace that we can have fellowship with Jesus every day through the Holy Spirit. It may be still hardships during our lives, but we will not forget the love of the resurrected Jesus Christ, and God's love will fill us with peace and joy. Thank you, God our Father. I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen