

Sermon

Osaka International Church

August 29th 2021

Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Let's Live From Grace to Grace"

—The Fruitful Life—

Text: John 15:1–5

15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

15:2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

15:3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

15:4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

– Good morning everyone, I am so happy to be here at your church and worship together our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you also for your invitation today as a guest speaker. It is my honor to serve God at your church this morning.

1. First, I would like to introduce myself and then give you a message.

My name is Teiichiro Kuroda. I am Pastor at Kitahama International Bible church. This is the third church where I may serve the Lord. I had no idea that I would become a Pastor, but that was the plan of God.

- By the way, I was born in Taiwan in 1946, which was one year after the second world war. My parents used to live and work in Taipei, but we had to come back to Japan in 1947, and I grew up in Nagoya. In 1970, I went to Duesseldorf, Germany to study at a university. I wanted to study for a few years and then come back to my school to be a professor.
- But the Lord is great. He had a wonderful plan for my life. I became a Christian when I was 14 years old, and I used to go to church. And I had a dream to go out of Japan and to learn about other people in the world, I was interested in other cultures and languages. But I had no idea how to go to abroad. That was more than 55 years ago. At that time, most people remained in Japan, so going to abroad was a kind of a dream.
- When I was 22 years old, God brought me to Germany (West Germany at that time) to study at the two universities, in Duesseldorf and Trier. It took time to master the

language because it was not easy for me. But God had His plan for my life.

- The city of Duesseldorf was a so-called a Japanese colony at that time because many Japanese business people and their family members were there. There were about 10,000 Japanese people living there at that time. These Japanese were so called the top people of Japanese companies and Japanese societies, and they went to well-known schools and universities. They were rich people, but they seemed to be very poor people spiritually.
- Some Japanese people tried to commit suicide because of the small Japanese community, and they had problems and conflicts etc. They had no purpose to live, they didn't know the goal of life. You know, I was a Christian and I wanted to tell them a gospel of Jesus Christ and the word of God. We all live only once.
- So I started to open the Bible class in Dusseldorf among Japanese people though I was a university student. The Lord blessed my ministry among Japanese speaking people. More and more people joined our meeting and people were saved by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- In 1976, the Lord called me to become a Pastor, so I started to build Japanese Christian church in Duesseldorf. It was the first Japanese speaking church in Europe. The Lord had already planned to use me as His instrument in Germany though I didn't know it at all.

- The Lord had also His great plan for my life during my stay in Germany. From the end of 1960 German government had invited German people from Rosia, Romania and other East European countries. Thousands of Germans immigrated into these countries in 18th century, and they were living in East European countries. It passed closed to 300 years, but they all kept German culture and their language, they built German colonies.
- I don't know if you know that Germany was divided into West and East after the second world war. East Germany and other East European countries were occupied by communism and socialism, which means they didn't recognize living God of the Bible. So, there were many atheists in these countries, Christians and churches were persecuted a lot.
- The Lord had a plan for my life to meet these people who came out of these communist countries. I thought there were not so many Christians in these countries, but conversely, there were so many Christians. These Christians were persecuted very much because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Many Germans and Jews were sent to concentration and labor camps in Siberia. That was the beginning of my ministry

behind iron curtain countries. I don't have enough time to tell you all of those stories today.

- So the Lord had His plan for my life, first He brought me to Germany and built the Duesseldorf Japanese Christian church and then He planned for me to meet Russian Germans and Romanian Germans. I stayed altogether 12 years in Germany. That was His plan.
- After I came back to Japan, the Lord already planned to use me to build an international church in Sakai. I started to open an English and German conversation school and invited Christian teachers from the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, England, Singapore, Germany, Switzerland and so on. We had English and German Bible classes, and we started Sakai International Bible Church through this language school in Sakai. That was a wonderful time for us.
- In 1989, the Berlin wall collapsed as you now know. The following year, West and East Germany united to become nation. That was a historical happening and in 1991 the Soviet Union had also collapsed, and then other East European countries began to collapse within half a year, and they became independent countries. There were neither communist countries nor East European countries anymore. Europe became one at that moment.
- At that time, people were so curious to know which way Europe would go. Secular people showed me interest and invited me to give lectures. They were not Christians or churches. So, I was invited by the Lions club, the Rotary club, and the Chamber of Commerce etc.
- Because I am a Pastor and used the Bible at my lectures, secular people showed their interest for the Bible, so I started to open a Bible class with business people, and more and more people joined us in my Bible class. So Kitahama International Bible Church was born, and this church was started by my business lectures.
- God used me to build three churches in my life. In 1981, I also started to build a mission called, "The Voice of Mission" to help persecuted Christians and churches in the world. I have written a monthly magazine for about 40 years long. This is the brief history of my life.

2. Now I would like to give you a message.

- Jesus told the Parable of the Vine just before being crucified, during His Passion. We understand why the parable is important. Then, what was the real meaning of the

parable?

- First of all, Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. (15:5)。
- The Israelites must have been the choicest vine. God the Farmer planted the good vine, but it became a bad wild vine. It was planted as the good vine for good wine, but it became a bad vine which bore bad fruit. That was the real result.
- But, why? ⇒ Because of the unfaithfulness and the sins of Israel.
- However, God the Farmer is the One of love. He carried out the plan so that the vine could bear good fruit. And the plan was fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

1) Jesus is the True Vine.

- Jesus said, “I am the true vine” in 15.1. “True” means the genuine thing, not a false one. It means “the real vine”, not the one of the history of Israel.
- My friends, the Farmer thinks it is very important for the vine to bear good fruit.

{Example}

A vineyard sits for a long distance on both sides of the Mosel River in Germany. The great river of 544 km runs through Luxembourg into Germany and joins the Rhein River, which headstream is in France. There are beautiful vineyards on both sides of the gently winding river. The river runs into Germany first through the city of Trier, where I was studying at the University of Trier.

• It took one hour to get to the university from my homestay house by bicycle. As I was attending the university, I was extremely impressed by the farmers working in the vineyards. They were working there every day both on snowy winter days and on hot summer days.

• The harvest in autumn lasted just a week. There was no school during that harvest time and all of adults and children were gathering grapes in the vineyards. It was a joyful time. They were working faithfully for an entire year for the one week of harvest time. And there, the famous Mosel wine is produced.

2) The Farmer's Work

• The farmer cares for each vine with caution. Grape cultivation in Europe is focused on the hedging styles and the overhead trellis method is in seen in Japan. The grape cultivation method in Palestine at that time was to make the vine branches creep over the ground. The method was to make branches exposed to nighttime dew. We see the branches in Israel like that even today. However, vine branches need an appropriate

amount of air between the branches and the ground surface to bear fruit. Then the farmers lay large stones between them and make the branches creep over them to bear fruit. God the Father in heaven prepares the environment for us to bear fruit.

• A farmer's work entails mainly two things:

① To Cut Off Branches

John 15:2 says, **He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit,**

Japanese translation writes "my branches", but "every branch" is found in the English translation. And "bears no fruit" in the original language means, "a thing which has no will to bear fruit". The other work of the farmer is "to prune".

② To Prune the Branches

John 15:2 ...while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

"To prune" is *kathairo*, to cleanse away, in the original language. In ancient times, people compared pruning to "cleansing". "To prune" was used according to the meaning of "to cleanse away". The German Bible uses the term *reinigen*, to wash clean. John 15:5 is being translated "to prune branches" (trimming a tree) from the context. The purpose of pruning is to bear much fruit. "Pruning" is the farmer's work. The branches can't prune themselves.

• "Pruning" is done to bear much fruit. There are no Christians who do not experience pruning. If someone has hardships in their life it means, in a way, that God the Father is pruning them ⇒ so that they will bear abundant fruit.

• Jesus said that abundant fruit is yielded by "pruning". The Bible teaches about various kinds of spiritual fruits, for example:

(1) **The Fruit of the Spirit:** The Epistle to the Galatians

5:22 **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**

5:23 **gentleness and self-control.**

(2) **Fruit of the light:** The Epistle to the Ephesians

5:9 **for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.**

(3) **Fruit of lips:** The Epistle to the Hebrews

13:15 **Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confesses his name**

- God prunes us to bear the blessing of fruit.

3) The Secret to Bear Fruit

- By the way, we want to bear fruit in our life. Jesus teaches two things about the secret to bear fruit.

① God's Word

John 15:3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

- Jesus said something strange, "You are already clean because of the word". It isn't about the deed. For example, Jesus washed His disciples' dirty feet. However, the point is Jesus' Word, not His deed, in washing feet. Jesus said that the Word makes clean.
- I told you before that "prune" has the meaning to make clean in the German term *reinigen*. Jesus said here, "You are already clean because of the word". His Word relates to chapter 15, verse 5. That is that His Word has authority, not deeds. "I am the vine; you are the branches." (15:5) It is the Word that has authority. The other secret is to remain in Jesus.

② To Remain in Jesus

- No branch can bear fruit by itself no matter how hard it tries.

15:4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

- The Bible writes the important secret to bear fruit here. ⇒ "Remain in me". We easily depart away and become fruitless.
- My friends, it doesn't mean that we can automatically bear fruit because we have faith in God. "Remain in me". We should remain in Jesus' Word, and we need to do it with our will and our choices. Jesus said, "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you". (15:3)

The blood of Jesus has power to cleanse our uncleanness and spots. Therefore, we should remain in His Word of the Bible.

- The Word is the secret where we, the branches, can remain in the vine with Jesus Christ through daily devotional time. Branches need nourishment from the tree. Like this, we can get nourishment through devotion time.
- As we learn in this way, we come to know that relationship between the vine and its branches is the relation of life. That is that the relationship between the vine and its branches is ⇒ "The Fellowship of Life".

• My friends, the Church of Christ has "The Fellowship of Life". Jesus is the head of church and is still alive. "The Fellowship of Life" is the community including Christ's life. "The Fellowship of Life" is the Church of Christ. The community of life where the Lord presents should not have uncleanness or spots. This is the place to experience the Kingdom of Heaven in this world. Jesus said,

• "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (15:5)

Let's remain firmly in Jesus Christ the vine this year, 2021. We would like to have nourishment from Jesus and bear much fruit in Christ.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "Let's Live From Grace to Grace"

—The Fruitful Life—

1. Let's give thanks to God

The Father in heaven who is the Farmer and also the Vine who is Jesus Christ.

2. Let's remain firmly in the vine ⇒ to have rich nourishment of the Word.

• Let's build the church of "The Fellowship of Life". He will lead us to a blessed life living in God's master plan.

We can begin to lead a fruitful life from now on. Let's give thanks to God again!

* God bless you!