

■ 114th Sharing of the Word

● First Reading: Isaiah 2:1-5

Around the 8th century B.C., the Kingdom of Judah enjoyed economic prosperity, yet society was corrupted by idolatry and injustice. In this reality, Isaiah proclaimed the “hope for the coming of God’s Kingdom.” The prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, received a divine revelation concerning the future of Judah and Jerusalem, shown to him as a “vision” of the spiritual arrival of God’s Kingdom.

The end of the world is not the “last day” itself; rather, through the Second Coming of Jesus, God’s rule will be completed in the new Kingdom of God. Mount Zion, which symbolizes God’s presence, is called “the mountain of the Lord’s temple,” representing the spiritual Kingdom.

“All nations shall stream toward it” expresses the universal salvation of all peoples seeking God. The people of Israel are referred to as “Jacob,” and the temple is “the house of God.” The act of people worshipping God and following His teaching is described as “going up,” and God’s instruction which guides people to live in justice, love, peace, and truth is expressed as “the Lord will teach us His ways,” leading them to “walk in His paths.”

Since “instruction will go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem,” God’s truth spreads from the temple to the whole world. “The Lord shall judge between the nations,” and through His justice, true peace is established. God admonishes the people and leads them back to Him.

When “swords are beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks,” weapons become tools for cultivation, war ends, and true peace (shalom) is realized. The people will no longer “train for war.” Now that we are illuminated by God’s truth and light, we are exhorted to “walk in the light of the Lord.”

● Second Reading: Romans 13:11-14

In the earlier part of the chapter, Paul exhorts believers to “live within God’s order” and to “fulfill the law through love.” In this passage, he declares that the completion of salvation is drawing near, and therefore “now is the time” to awaken faith. A state of indifference or sin is “sleep,” while awakening to God’s will leads to a life of sensitivity and readiness, lived with awareness of the Second Coming.

“Salvation is nearer” for all humanity, and we are now in the process of its completion. “The night is far spent,” drawing near to dawn; the age of sin and evil is nearing its end, and the completion of God’s reign is close at hand “the day is near.”

Acts contrary to God (Romans 13:13) are “works of darkness,” while the “armor of light” is the spiritual protection (Ephesians 6:13?16) by which we resist evil. Before God, we hide nothing and walk “honorably as in the day” with sincerity, transparency, modesty, propriety, kindness, and self-control.

Examples of “works of darkness” include “revelry and drunkenness, debauchery and lust, quarreling and jealousy.” Instead of being ruled by desires or emotions, believers live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. By “putting on” the heart, words, actions, and prayer of Jesus, we make them our own flesh and blood and aim for a “new way of life.”

● Gospel Reading: Matthew 24:37?44

In Jesus’ “Olivet Discourse,” He speaks about the destruction of the Temple and the end times. The disciples ask about the signs of these events (Matthew 24:3). Jesus teaches that “no one knows the day or the hour” (Matthew 24:36) and that the end will come suddenly.

The Second Coming will be “as in the days of Noah.” People then ignored the warning and continued their ordinary lives, and were destroyed by the flood. The same will occur at the Second Coming it will certainly arrive without prior notice. Jesus warns against lives consumed by worldly pleasures and desires “eating, drinking… marrying” while neglecting God.

He warns against “carelessness, indifference, and unbelief.” At the Second Coming, those who follow God will be “taken” into the new Kingdom, while those without faith will be “left” for judgment, descending to Sheol. Even in the same place, destinies will differ depending on faith. The same applies to the “two women” at the mill. Like the “wise virgins” (Matthew 25:4), we must practice the Lord’s teaching, remain “awake,” and live so as not to be ashamed when He returns. The parable of the thief coming at night teaches: “Do not be careless; serve God and be prepared for the end.” It calls for a life lived with a holy attentiveness.

【Christmas】

“Christ-Mass” began in the 4th century, when Christianity was legalized, becoming associated with the Roman winter solstice festival. Its essence is worship that commemorates the event of salvation.

It is the day when the Son of God was born as the Son of Man, in order to redeem humanity’s sin through His death on the cross. It is a day of “quiet and profound joy” a “day of holy silence.”

【Advent】 Four Themes

Reflecting on the four stages of salvation history in the Old Testament.

Meditating on the four comings of Christ: prophecy, first coming, present coming, and second coming.

Symbolizing the Gospel spreading in four directions (east, west, south, north).

The historical development of a four-week period of preparation.

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