

Let us Look up to the Lord Jesus 1

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主イエスを仰ぎ見ましょう1
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ゴットホルド・ベック

Psalms

32:7 You are my hiding place; you will deliver me from trouble and surround me with shouts of deliverance. Interlude.

32:8 I will instruct you and teach you concerning the path you should walk; I will direct you with my eye.

32:9 Don't be like a horse or mule, without understanding. They are held in check by a bit and bridle in their mouths; otherwise, they will not remain near you.

32:10 The wicked have many sorrows, but gracious love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.

32:11 Righteous ones, be glad in the Lord and rejoice! Shout for joy, all of you who are upright in heart!

[International Standard Version]

These verses we just read contain a wonderful promise. It is not merely a promise given to David 3000 years ago, but is also a calling to each and every one of us, which gives us that same wonderful promise.

Psalms

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Today, I would like to discuss with you the importance, possibility, and greatness of looking up to this savior, the Lord Jesus.

The Bible clearly states that any children of God, even the saved ones, have a possibility of losing the joy of salvation. The growth of faith is hindered when believers look to other people, or are captivated by the temptation of the devil, instead of looking up to Jesus alone.

Those who have stopped looking up to Jesus are very pitiful as they begin walking down the wrong path. However, the Bible says that even such people will eventually be restored to the right path, as Jesus has promised that he will never forsake us.

The verses cited above explain two different ways of leading people. In one way, the Lord directs them with his eyes and shows them the right path to walk. However, there is also another way, where people are held in check by a bit and bridle. This is because there are some people who cannot be guided by the eyes or gaze of Jesus, and the Lord has no choice but to use a bit and bridle to make such people obey him.

Very often, this existence is accompanied by pain and anxiety. However, even when people are led by a bit and bridle, the Lord will never forsake them, but continue to love them. Thus, under all circumstances, believers will feel the love of Jesus, a love which will allow them to live positively in peace.

There is no doubt that those led by the bit and bridle of the Lord know pain. But, this pain will only last until you give up your drive for self-determination and self-governance, and instead walk the faithful path with your eyes looking up to Jesus alone.

After all, according to the direction we have chosen to direct our eyes, we are either filled with joy or have to live in darkness. There is a famous shrine in Nikko that is known for its carvings of the three monkeys- those who hear, speak, and see no evil.

These statues represent the traditional moral lesson that you can stay away from trouble if you carefully avoid seeing, hearing or talking about bad things. In other words, when people are put into situations where they can neither see, hear, nor talk, for example, someone who is blind, deaf and mute, they are protected from everything.

Recently, I met a brother on Amami-Oshima Island. He is totally blind, but he is filled with hope. I felt so much delight when I heard his prayer that I could only admire the Lord. This man lives with his father, who is 94 year-old, but in the Lord, they are like one person.

They understand that the Lord is our guide and all they need to do is to simply receive what the Lord gives to them. I felt grateful that they came to live with this attitude and that all the family members knew the love of Jesus.

The greatest dangers in our lives come when we are preoccupied by something we see, and we lose sight of Jesus. You have to choose between being caught up in the reality of your life or relying on the promise of the Lord. For example, let us look in the Old Testament, where the people of Israel were given a wonderful, amazing promise.

As they came to a new land, twelve spies were selected and dispatched to investigate it before entering. Ten of these spies came back and said to

the people of Israel, "We're like grasshoppers, and that's their opinion of us. To enter this place is impossible. Let us just forget it."

However, the attitude of two other men was different, and they testified—"Don't rebel against the Lord or be afraid of the people who live in this land, because the Lord is with us. You are not to be afraid of them."

As we can see from these verses, before these men was a terrible reality, and most of the spies lost their faith when they saw it. However, as the two remaining men pointed out, they only lost their way because they had forgotten to look up to the Lord. They had forgotten that whoever looketh up to the Lord experiences an unimaginable strength.

Composer, Johann Sebastian Bach wrote a series of compositions called Cantatas, and Bach used the following expression in one of his well-known Cantatas- "Those who keep looking up to the Lord will renew their strength. Then they'll soar on wings like eagles."

These words are the spoken truth, and by themselves are wonderful gospel. However, when music is added to them, it makes people feel like dancing. I believe Naoko is familiar with this Cantata, which is truly amazing. Unfortunately, however, many believers are like moles instead of eagles.

They are living like moles in that they are totally tied up in their own lives and cannot look up to the Lord. When we look up to the Lord, we will see the eyes of the Lord, which are filled with love. Let us read some verses now.

Mark

10:17 As Jesus was setting out again, a man ran up to him, knelt down in front of him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

10:18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked him. "Nobody is good except for one—God.

10:19 You know the commandments: 'Never murder.' 'Never commit adultery.' 'Never steal.' 'Never give false testimony.' 'Never cheat.' 'Honor your father and mother.'"

10:20 The man replied to him, "Teacher, I have obeyed all of these since I was a young man."

10:21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. Then he told him, "You're missing one thing. Go and sell everything you own, give the money to the destitute, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come back and follow me."

10:22 Shocked at this statement, the man went away sad, because he had many possessions.

However, Jesus must have felt even sadder than him. This rich man, at least was filled with a hunger and thirst. After all, there was an emptiness in his

heart which made him kneel down in front of the Lord and ask him what he had to do to inherit an eternal life- a life that would last forever.

In fact, he could have anything he wanted. Although he was a very wealthy man, his heart had never been fulfilled. He understood that the things in this world which his eyes could see were all transient and would someday vanish. That was why he sought something eternal, and he wanted to know how he could gain the eternal life.

Men can only be fulfilled by eternal life in a true sense. However, to obtain eternal life, all men have to admit that they are all heading toward destruction and realize that they absolutely need the Lord's salvation. To make this man realize his situation, Jesus drew upon the Ten Commandments of Moses in the second chapter of Exodus from the Old Testament, "Never murder. Never commit adultery. Never steal. Never give false testimony. Never cheat. Respect your parents." The young man proudly answered that he had been faithful to all of these commandments.

This means that he was totally blind to his own situation. For, if you do not recognize your own sins, as a matter of course, you cannot confess them. And, if you do not confess your sins, your sins will never be forgiven. Those who do not obtain forgiveness for their sins will never be able to possess the eternal life.

John

3:36 The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who disobeys the Son will not see life. Instead, the wrath of God remains on him.

There will be no hope left for them. Many people believe that as far as they obey all of these commandments, they will need no further advice, just like that young man. But, when people think this way, the eyes of their hearts are blinded by the devil, and they do not realize what is actually happening to them. The Lord had to cast these harsh words over those in Laodicea.

Revelation

3:17 You say, "I am rich. I have become wealthy. I don't need anything." Yet you don't realize that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

If you realize it, at least you can do something about your situation. Suppose you get cancer, and you don't feel any pain at the beginning and you don't think you have even minor health problem. But, actually your doctor knows that you will live no longer than three months. You have some hope if you are aware of it. Otherwise, it is nothing but a tragedy.

Although Jesus understood very well this young man's state of mind, as we just read, and knew that he was blinded by the devil, he still refused to forsake this man. David, the author of the Psalms experienced this greatness and grace of the Lord repeatedly in his life.

Psalms

34:18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, and he delivers those whose spirit has been crushed.

David made this confession. Why? Because this was exactly what he had realized from his personal experience.

Psalms

51:17 True sacrifice to God is a broken spirit. A broken and chastened heart, God, you will not despise.

David was compelled to praise the grace of the Lord with these words.

Isaiah

57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: He lives in the height and in holiness, and also with the one who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

61:1 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed and to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners;

66:2 ...declares the Lord; But this is the one to whom I will look favorably: to the one who is humble and contrite in spirit, and who trembles at my message.

As we have just read, this rich man did not know the true state of his own mind; nevertheless, Jesus looked at him with immeasurable love and said, "You're missing one, most important thing."

Jesus said to him, "If you want to come with me, you have to sell everything you own, then bear my cross and follow me." Jesus loved this man from the bottom of his heart when he came to see the Lord.

His true and deep love commanded this man to sell everything he had, then carry the cross and follow him. Jesus still looks at each one of you who are gathered here today with the same deep loving eyes he had when he looked upon this man. Jesus is ready to provide you with the true salvation and fulfillment of heart. Jesus, not only wants to fulfill your heart, but invites you to follow him as well.

Those who are forgiven for their sins are the saved ones, those who have already received the eternal life. Jesus always cares about each one of us and is willing to direct us toward the supreme purpose of life. In this sense, it is totally wrong to believe that when you are saved, you have reached the goal of life and nothing important is left to be done.

When Jesus saw this young man, he loved him. The eyes of Jesus are the 'eyes of love'. Let us continue to read the Bible to see that the eyes of Jesus are not only the eyes of love. His eyes are also the 'eyes of hope'. There is no need to give up your hope. You can begin to live in a positive way.

Luke

19:1 As Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it,

19:2 a man named Zacchaeus appeared. He was a leading tax collector, and a rich one at that!

19:3 He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he couldn't do so due to the crowd, since he was a short man.

19:4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was going to pass that way.

19:5 When Jesus came to the tree, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down! I must stay at your house today."

19:6 Zacchaeus came down quickly and was glad to welcome him into his home.

19:7 But all the people who saw this began to complain: "Jesus is going to be the guest of a notorious sinner!"

19:8 Later, Zacchaeus stood up and announced to the Lord, "Lord, I'll give half of my possessions to the poor. I'll pay four times as much as I owe if I have cheated anyone in any way."

19:9 Then Jesus told him, "Today salvation has come to this home, because this man is also a descendant of Abraham.

When Jesus came to the tree, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down! I must stay at your house today." The town called Jericho, where this incident occurred, was known as a place cursed by the Lord God. There was no blessing in this town.

Zacchaeus lived in this cursed town as the chief of the tax collectors, and had certainly been living his life in pursuit of money. Presumably, he had been increasing his wealth through illicit means.

Although he was very wealthy, his heart was dominated by emptiness. He had never had peace of mind or eternal joy until this time. Somehow, he came to believe that Jesus would fill the emptiness in his heart. For this reason, he desperately wanted to see Jesus and meet him. Let us look at what happened then.

Jesus looked up to this man. Zacchaeus was in a sycamore tree, and they looked at each other. When Zacchaeus looked into the eyes of Jesus, there he saw true hope. Zacchaeus heard Jesus calling his name. At the same time, he realized that Jesus cared about him, too. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus told him that he was already planning to stay at Zacchaeus's house, where he would sit down and have fellowship with him. Zacchaeus was prepared in his soul to accept Jesus into his house. Nothing is more important for us than being ready to accept Jesus.

John

1:12 However, to all who received him, those believing in his name, he gave authority to become God's children.

1 John

5:13 I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Please pay attention to this expression- "So that you may know." Experiencing the Lord's love, Zacchaeus could finally understand that staying close to Jesus is by itself a wonderful blessing.

Those who have met Jesus will never again reside in the darkness because Jesus is light itself. Zacchaeus couldn't help but confess all of his sins to the Lord. When he did, he heard firsthand from Jesus that all his sins were already forgiven. And hearing this, Zacchaeus' life was completely turned around.

He, who had been living such a self-centered life and had been captivated by hunger for money, now came to have only one earnest desire: to please Jesus and follow him. We too need to find hope in the eyes of Jesus.

When you think of your own future from a human's perspective, it may seem as if your situation is totally hopeless and that there is no comfort in your life. Sometimes we feel unrelieved, disappointed or devastated. Please look up to the Lord Jesus when you feel this way. If you do, you will find the eyes of Jesus, filled with hope just like Zacchaeus did.

Jesus' hope filled eyes are inviting us to initiate fellowship with him. What does the fellowship with Jesus refer to? Having fellowship with Jesus is to be walking beside him in the light, just like Jesus himself once walked in the light. Furthermore, when we have true fellowship with Jesus, we will stop relying on anything other than him, who is life itself. So, we can see that having fellowship with Jesus is to express our heartfelt desire to please him.