

I Met the Lord of Resurrection.

April 3rd, 2016, Gospel Meeting, Oarai
Gotthold Beck

私はよみがえりの主に出会いました
2016年4月3日、大洗よろこびの集い
ゴットホルド・ベック

John

20:1 "On the first day of the week, early in the morning and while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and noticed that the stone had been removed from the tomb."

20:11 "Meanwhile, Mary stood crying outside the tomb. As she cried, she bent over and looked into the tomb.

20:12 She saw two angels in white clothes who were sitting down, one at the head and the other at the foot of the place where Jesus' body had been lying.

20:13 They asked her, "Lady, why are you crying?" She told them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they have put him."

20:14 After she had said this, she turned around and noticed Jesus standing there, without realizing that it was Jesus.

20:15 Jesus asked her, "Dear lady, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she told him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him away."

20:16 Jesus told her, "Mary!" She turned around and told him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means "Teacher").

20:17 Jesus told her, "Don't hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

20:18 So Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" She also told them what he had told her."

20:24 'Thomas, one of the Twelve (called the Twin), wasn't with them when Jesus came.

20:25 So the other disciples kept telling him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he told them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger into them, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe!"

20:26 A week later, his disciples were again inside, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were shut, Jesus came, stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you."

20:27 Then he told Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Take your hand, and put it into my side. Stop doubting, but believe."

20:28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus told him, "Is it because you have seen me that you have believed? How blessed are those who have never seen me and yet have believed!"

[International Standard Version]

Every time I come here, it reminds me of the good old days. Because we began to live in an adjacent town, Nakaminato 61 years ago, and we had the blessing of having home meetings in Naka-Minato, which was followed by Hitachi and Tsuchiura as well as this town, Oarai. Of course, no roads were paved in those days at all. We walked on gravel roads, and it was so dusty everywhere.

It is proof that the Lord is still alive that we can get together again this way today. We call our meetings, "the gathering of joy" indeed. But, why? All those who gather are in serious pain or trouble; they are suffering from an illness called loneliness, aren't they? The reason we call our meetings the "gathering of joy" is that it provides us with an opportunity to repent. If we only humble ourselves, everything will be okay. James, one of the disciples of Jesus summarized what the entire Bible is trying to tell us very well in this short sentence: "God opposes the arrogant but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). If we are humble, it is just enough for the Lord. Because we are given a chance to repent here, we call it a "gathering of joy."

I was back in Vancouver last week and met many people. I have my birthday in there every year. One sister living there makes a cake for everybody. It is always a very large cake. Quite impressive. I want you all to remember the name of this sister and add it to the subject of your prayers; her name is sister Hiromi.

She is from Japan and I guess that her husband is English. He left their home and lives separately. He comes back to her house every day because he wants to see his children and walk with his dog, but, he completely ignores his wife. It must be very hard for her. However, she is still filled with joy all the time being in the Lord. She offers the prayer of David like other sisters. Prayers of David can be found in the Psalms.

I used to suggest to many people that it is better not to start reading from the gospel according to Matthew. It is not an easy thing to read. It begins with a genealogy, which does not interest us at all, although it might be of great importance to the Jewish people. I once thought it was a good idea to begin reading from Mark, but lately, I recommend you read the Psalms. If you read the Psalms before prayers and then, pray reading the Psalms, the light shines in you. It helps you to begin to live positively

with peace of mind.

I don't believe that Easter, the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus is marked in Japanese calendars. I quickly checked around and found that lately, many calendars sold in the U.S do not have this celebration. I don't know what is happening there. It is marked in calendars sold in Canada and Germany. We have no life if Jesus was not resurrected. There would have been no hope at all in this world. Therefore, meeting the resurrected Jesus is more important than anything. It is possible; it is necessary and it is meaningful for us to do so.

Let us look up a few verses from the first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 15, which is also known as the book of the resurrection:

1 Corinthians

15:3 "For I passed on to you the most important points that I received: The Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
15:4 he was buried, he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures—and is still alive!"—

Paul did not care about what other people thought of him or what they expected from him; the only thing that was important was what the Bible said. He always took this attitude, which is indicated in the expression "according to the scriptures" that is used twice in these verses.

15:5 "And he was seen by Cephas, and then by the Twelve.

Cephas refers to Peter.

15:6 After that, he was seen by more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.
15:7 Next he was seen by James, then by all the apostles,
15:8 and finally he was seen by me, as though I were born abnormally late.
15:9 For I am the least of the apostles and not even fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted God's church.

Here, Paul was filled with joy when he said, "finally Christ was seen by me."

A long time ago, I guess it was many decades ago, in Russia, or in former Soviet Union, people celebrated Easter by ringing the bell of all the churches in all the towns for a week to praise the resurrection of the Lord. These bells were heard throughout the country. People praised Jesus being filled with great joy and when they met with each other, they said: "The Lord was resurrected" by way of greeting instead of just saying "hello."

The answer to this greeting was always, "The Lord was truly resurrected." All the towns were filled with joy and full of life indeed. That was not all. Until the celebration of the Ascension that was held 40 days later, Russian Christians who usually prayed kneeling down on the floor, prayed standing on their feet for those 40 days because of overwhelming delight.

If someone died during the 40 days between Easter and the Ascension, instead of singing sorrowful hymns, they gathered around the grave and sang the song of resurrection to praise Jesus for conquering death.

What is it that is most important in our lives? It is to meet the resurrected Jesus again and to be recreated, isn't it?

Paul expressed his joy of meeting the resurrected Lord Jesus by writing, "Finally Jesus was seen by me." We too should desire to meet the Lord again. How did Paul come to believe in Jesus? It was not because he was explained theoretically and was persuaded to do so. It was neither because he was threatened nor forced to learn about Jesus.

Paul met the resurrected Lord face to face, which changed his life fundamentally. His life was now completely different. The resurrected Lord became all in all for Paul by this encounter. The kind of love we urgently need is the new love that is given by our Lord God to us.

Let us look at three people who met Jesus after the resurrection; they are Peter, a disciple called Thomas and a man called James.

What did Peter obtain when he met the resurrected Jesus? It is clearly explained in the Bible. He recovered the trust of others. The resurrection of Jesus became all of all for Peter.

If Jesus did not come back to life, what would have happened to Peter? It is too terrible to imagine. Peter denied knowing Jesus outright. He betrayed the One he loved saying, "I do not know Jesus. I have no idea what you are talking about."

He lived with Jesus for three and half years indeed. He was incredibly cowardly. As I just mentioned, he had a special privilege of staying with Jesus for three and half years, walking with Him and being loved by Jesus. He also received a lot of advice from Jesus during their face-to-face conversations. Nevertheless, he denied Him saying, "I never knew Jesus." Once, he not only said that, but pledged that he would never forsake Jesus. However, Peter actually abandoned Jesus.

Jesus, whom Peter denied, died on the cross. There was no longer anyone who wanted to support Peter in this world. The Lord Jesus of the resurrection must have been the only person who could help Peter.

Mark

16:6 But he told them, "Stop being astonished! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised. He is not here. Look at the place where they laid him.

16:7 But go and tell his disciples, especially Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

When Jesus resurrected and sent an angel to let His disciples know of His resurrection, He intentionally mentioned the name of Peter. He said, "Go and tell all the disciples, especially Peter, that Jesus came back to life."

Peter was completely devastated because he denied Jesus before He was killed. If his name was not especially mentioned when Jesus said, "disciples, especially Peter," he would have been ruined. He would never have stood up and walked again.

It is not hard to imagine that the other disciples had by now despised Peter, who betrayed their Lord. They probably considered he did not belong to their flock anymore. When they heard that Peter denied the Lord Jesus, the other disciples must have decided to stop respecting him as their leader. After all, Peter lost their trust because of his denial of the Lord Jesus. The other disciples could no longer trust Peter as their leader. I believe that it was to dissolve this distrust against Peter that Jesus made a special mention of his name when He said, "disciples, especially Peter."

We are very much like Peter, aren't we? He was not exceptional, rather, he was an ordinary person like us; he does not look much different from us, does he? If we still stand on the same foundation as we used to before the resurrection, we have nothing to rely on when we are faced with serious trouble.

We can never rely on ourselves as we are all deceitful by nature. Once, Peter was determined and pledged to protect the Lord; but his determination for Jesus faded away, which consequently made him betray the Lord. Peter was called by the Lord Jesus to guide the flock of His disciples.

Now Peter denied Jesus and he was on the brink of failing as His disciple. However, the resurrection of Jesus saved him from the depths of despair. Peter returned to what he used to be. In the eyes of his fellow disciples, Peter showed a remarkable recovery.

Through the tragedy of denying Jesus, Peter could

realize the true state of his mind. The three days after Peter denied the Lord until Jesus came back to life must have been the darkest days in his life.

For Peter, these three days were certainly like the darkest nights. However, it was necessary for him to go through this darkness. If the resurrected Lord did not appear to Peter, he would have sunk into despair and could not stand up on his feet again. I believe that in order for us to serve Jesus, we too need to have the same experience as Peter.

We will be truly blessed, if we stop living a life driven by ego, instead, if we are brought back to and stand on the foundation of His resurrection we will begin to live in the Lord God. It is not known what they talked about when the Lord of the resurrection appeared to Peter. However, Peter was certainly changed.

Luke

24:34 They kept saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon!"

This verse clearly shows us that Jesus spoke very amicably with Simon Peter. We, of course, do not need to know what Jesus and Peter talked about in this conversation and there is no way we will find out. However, we need Him to show us, just like He did to Peter, how insincere we have been with the Lord and that we are the owners of hearts that are filled with distrust against Him.

It is not until these are shown to us that we can stand on the same ground as Peter, who later completely came back on his feet. After being tested by fire, Peter became a man of unshakable Christian faith, which cannot be moved by anything; it was like a rock as was implied in his name. Peter was transformed into a believer who deserved to be trusted by many people.

The Lord of the resurrection recreated Peter, which renewed his trust in the Lord Jesus and transformed him so that he was trusted by his many fellow Christians. What we urgently need is a new "reliance" on the Lord, isn't it? "I entrust my life to the Lord no matter what happens." When we entrust all things to Jesus, whom we trust, we will be relieved in all aspects of our lives.

Now, let us discuss for a moment, Thomas, who met the resurrected Lord. A man called Thomas was given renewed faith. He used to be an unbelieving man who had a doubtful nature. Let us read some verses:

John

20:24 Thomas, one of the Twelve (called the Twin), wasn't with them when Jesus came.

20:25 So the other disciples kept telling him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he told them, "Unless I

see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger into them, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe!"

When the other disciples heard about the resurrection of the Lord, they were so delighted and they let their fellow brother Thomas know about it. But he perversely refused to believe it. His disbelief remained until he saw Jesus face to face. As we can see from the Bible, the Lord of the resurrection came back one more time only to see unbelieving Thomas. What a merciful Lord He is!

When Thomas, who once said, "Unless I put my finger into the nail marks in Jesus' hands and put my hand into his side, I would never believe," saw Jesus appear in front of his eyes, he could only fall down on his knees and worship Him, not even putting his finger into the nail marks according to the Bible.

It is incredible that doubtful Thomas was changed this way. He was transformed to a true worshipper. Even while he was a man full of doubts, he was constantly seeking the light believing that if he received a new light, all his doubts would dissolve. However, why didn't Jesus appear to Thomas earlier?

It was not because of the Lord, but it was because of Thomas. He was not with the other disciples after His death. If Thomas did not come back to his brethren, but had walked away on his own, not only would he be unable to see Jesus again, but his life would have ended up in an unimaginably miserable way.

Jesus is not only the head of each believer, but He is the head of all flocks of believers, that is to say, the church, which is His body. It is for this reason that Jesus very often shows Himself up where brothers and sisters in the Lord gather to praise His name. Having doubt is not such a formidable thing. Thomas doubted. But, he was an honest man. He simply could not believe that Jesus came back to life, and he candidly confessed that he could not believe it instead of pretending as if he could.

Many people move forward, pretending as if they believe in the Lord, even though they actually are not sure about their belief. I would say that Thomas was, in a sense, better than such people. Each one of us has our own problems. We will continue to live with various troubles and pains. One day, we will absolutely run into such problems, which will never be tackled without Jesus of the resurrection standing in front of us.

When we do, let us sincerely seek a new light just like Thomas did. Then, the Lord of the resurrection will absolutely help us and all our problems will dissolve. Thomas was seeking a new light and his

heart was prepared to accept that light. He did not refuse to return to the brethren of Jesus' believers and move forward with them.

He remained in the fellowship of the disciples, although he still had doubts. And when Jesus appeared to Thomas, he knelt down in front of the Lord. As we look back into our past, we all have to admit how disobedient we have been to Jesus, and we caused Him much grief. One of the things we desperately need is to meet the resurrected Lord Jesus who came back to life and ask for the new true faith.

Now, I would like to talk about James briefly. It is written in the first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 7: "Next he was seen by James." James was the biological younger brother of Jesus.

In the aftermath, James came to be called "James the Righteous" and became one of the overseers of the early church in Jerusalem. As we read the epistle James wrote, we realize that he was a man who placed great importance on righteousness and justice. The problem that had been ailing this man James for many years was about his righteousness; he was not sure whether his righteousness was real, or if it was righteousness by the laws or his self-defined righteousness. Although he had been living with Jesus, the Son of God as his older biological brother since he was born, he criticized Jesus and even despised Him.

He always felt bitter about Jesus having meals with degenerate sinners, His not obeying the man-made laws and not respecting the Sabbaths. It was because of these things that he refused to obey the Lord just like Bible scholars.

John

7:5 "Not even his brothers believed in him."

James did not believe in Jesus while He was alive. To James, who continued to refuse to accept Jesus, finally, the time came that he was compelled to accept his brother as the Lord. Jesus is now on the cross and is enduring horrible pain. In excruciating pain, Jesus said to His disciple John, "here is your mother" and entrusted His biological mother, Mary to His disciple, John. Then, He turned to His mother, Mary and said, "Dear lady, here is your son" asking her to live under the care of John throughout her life.

Why didn't Jesus entrust his birth mother to his biological brother, James, instead entrusted her to John? I imagine that James did not get along well with his mother, Mary, who believed Jesus from His birth and was separated from her for a long time. What a terrible tragedy it is that a life of the mother who gave birth to him was not entrusted to him, instead, was left in the hands of others. It was a

consequence of the sin of justifying himself.

The consequence of justifying yourself is always a tragedy. Even the most ordinary and worldly people would never abandon their mothers because of their faith. However, James, who considered himself as righteous abandoned his mother. James was a man who always believed himself righteous.

In the first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul listed the names of the people to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared in the order of His appearance, in which the name of James came up near the end. Jesus appeared to all the worthless sinners and tax collectors before he appeared to James, who considered he was righteous. However, a miracle finally occurred in James. When James understood that justifying himself was completely meaningless, but it was rather an obstacle in his pursuit of faith, he broke down in front of Jesus and was given new righteousness. Many people justify themselves, which only makes them blind and puts them into a tragic situation like James was in.

It was nobody but the resurrected Jesus who could liberate James from the arrogance of believing himself righteous. It is only by seeing Jesus, the Lord of the resurrection again, that we obtain the same new righteousness James did and will be regarded as "the righteous men."

Finally, let us look at how Paul explained how Jesus appeared to him:

1 Corinthians
15:8 and finally he was seen by me, as though I were born abnormally late.

Paul loved the resurrected Lord Jesus. He received new love, new faith, and new righteousness. We will be truly blessed if we too can tell others that, "finally the resurrected Jesus was seen by me" being filled with joy just like Paul was. When we meet the resurrected Lord Jesus, our lives will be changed at its foundations. Jesus came back from death in order to give us the life of resurrection and the power of resurrection.

When we obtain the power of resurrection that the Lord Jesus provides us with, new love, new faith, and new trust will spring out. Just like the brothers in Corinth did, instead of learning some doctrines, we too need to literally kneel down in front of the Lord Jesus to have our hearts broken down and accept the power the resurrection of the Lord has prepared for us. If we truly believe that Jesus was resurrected, Jesus' life of resurrection, Jesus' power of resurrection is already there and waiting for us to be discovered.

This life of resurrection has a completely different

nature as compared to our innate life. This life, that once dwelt in Peter, Thomas, James, and Paul, is now dwelling within us; it is the life of the resurrected Lord Jesus. It is unimaginably important for us to meet the resurrected Lord Jesus.

What His resurrection meant for Peter was that he received new trust from others. Thomas was given renewed faith and as I just mentioned, it gave James new righteousness. We will be truly blessed if we can speak like Paul wholeheartedly, who will say, "Finally, he was seen by me." We should feel truly grateful if we can exclaim just like he did.

End