

# Vision of Praise

August 2020

*From the editor*

This time we would like to share a message from the Regional Worship Service in Chicago, "Dreaming in Christ" by Michael Suzuki, together with an testimony "A New Beginning Is Starting" by Nodoka Kobayashi.

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## **Dreaming in Christ**

*from the Regional Worship Service in Chicago*

Michael Suzuki

Exactly 30 years ago, in 1992, I made the decision to devote my life for Christ to become a missionary. The place where I made that decision was not in a church or in the midst of a large Christian congregation, but it was in the middle of nowhere, a wilderness, literally "wilderness."

At the time, I was working for a Japanese general construction company, and I was assigned to the overseas project at the oil refinery construction project in Iran. I lived in Iran for three years. The days were far more demanding than I had imagined.

Since Iran is established in Islamic fundamentalism, Christianity was and is strictly forbidden. There were no Christian churches and anything of Christian was banned. Evangelism may risk your life. Even we, foreigners, were no exception. I was isolated from not only my spiritual source but also from what I always had in my daily life until then.

Living in the wilderness, I felt as though I was left alone in a desolate place. But I was not alone, God was indeed with me, in retrospect.

I started to feel the love of God even through tiny flowers in the field. When I looked at flowers, I could feel His life which made them blossom so beautifully. As the wind blew, I could hear His lovely voice in the wind. Indeed I did feel the presence of Christ in a desolate environment, even in the place where no Christianity was grounded.

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.  
(Psalm 139:7-8 NKJ)

One day I was deeply touched by the presence of Christ while I was reading a Japanese Bible. Reading the Bible was also risky in Iran, yet any materials written in Japanese, whether it was the Bible or whatever, the authorities could not recognize what they were. So I was taking advantage of it and reading the Japanese Bible in my room.

As I read the Bible by myself without relying on any mediators of human interpretation, I was persuaded that the love of Christ described in the Bible is so straightforward, merciful, unconditional. How victorious the cross of Jesus Christ is! I was so moved that I desired to surrender my life to Christ and work for Him.

It's been 30 years since then. I've never grew tired of the love of Christ. It is always new, amazing, far beyond our human knowledge, and I always find solid hope.

This morning I would like to read you the scriptures of Acts chapter 2 verses 17-21. They are the scriptures that the Apostle Peter proclaimed as the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Joel. So the scriptures were originally from the book of the prophet Joel.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.

And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

(Acts 2:17-21 NKJ)

Here I want to focus on the verse 17 which said that young men shall see visions and old men shall dream dreams when God pours out His spirit. What about the generation that is in between the young and the old?

Surely they do likewise, seeing visions and dreaming dreams by the Holy Spirit. It shall happen to all generations, because there is no partiality with the gifts of God.

We now have entered a very tough and difficult time that everybody recognizes. People seem to have lost interests in talking about dreams and visions. Instead of such unrealistic things, they are eagerly thinking about how to survive in this

devastating time, how to keep food on the table, and how to protect themselves and their loved ones.

But that is not the only purpose for which we are alive today. By the Holy Spirit God has given each of us a dream that resonates with the mind of Christ.

I would like to share with you a testimony of one of my colleagues who works for Kohitsuji no Mure church in Japan. It is the story of the dream she dreamed. Her name is Kumiko.

She accepted Jesus Christ when she was a high school student. A few years after she met Jesus, she came to desire one thing that she wanted to work for the peace of the world. At the same time she thought that it would not be called a true peace unless all people become happy to the last one.

Of course, she understood intellectually that it was impossible to realize a true peace in this world, but she could not deny the voice echoing at her innermost self, “I want to work for the true peace of the world.” It was a dream she conceived in Christ.

On the other hand, she was suffering from depression at the time. Despite she discovered her sincere desire of the soul, her depression became severer and severer. Her depression became so serious that she was no longer able to go outside and cut herself off from her social life. She became a social recluse. Finally, one day she attempted suicide.

It was when she was 22 years old. She took many pills for epilepsy at one time with alcohol. She did it almost unconsciously. She instantly passed out. When she woke up, she was totally in a disaster, having a striking headache, massive cramps, and repeated vomiting.

She strongly beat herself over the head with the floor and walls due to the severity of cramps. It was absolutely uncontrollable as if someone else had occupied her. She felt so dreadful that she thought she was going to die soon. She could have died, but her life was somehow saved.

When she came to her senses, she blamed herself for this ending. She deeply regretted that a person like her who was mentally distressed should not have wished to work for the peace of the world. Moreover, her depression was so terrible as she attempted suicide. She thought, “If I cannot change myself, then how can I change the world? What I wished was way off base concerning myself.” If I were her, I would be in the same boat.

However, it was then she heard another voice speaking to her, breaking the voice of accusation. It said, “Thank you for wishing the peace of the world.”

She thought, “Where does this voice come from? Who is talking to me? It must be Someone who watched over me all this time.” She intuitively discovered the One who spoke to her was Jesus Christ, because the voice resounded was what could only be described as love and grace.

To make a long story short, after she heard the voice of Jesus, she started to give one simple and short prayer every day. That is, “Fill me with Your love and light.” That’s it. And she started to read out loud any one bible verse every day.

She continued to say a daily short prayer “Fill me with Your love and light” and a bible verse for only one week, then an astonishing thing happened to her. Suddenly, her depression went away. She was completely healed from her depression which had tormented her for a decade.

Soon after this event, she was able to return to an ordinary social life. She had become totally a new person. Her depression had never come back since then.

As you know, in this day and age, mental illness of depression is very difficult to be cured. Yet a significant number of people are suffering from depression all over the world. We are indefinite about its cause and treatment. The point is Kumiko did not take any physical or scientific complicated processes that required a big effort and patience, but God healed her in such a simple way.

After she got healed of her depression, she decided to surrender her life to Christ to work for Him. Wishing and working for the peace is still her sincere desire and dream. She believes that she has been entrusted with work for the peace just by giving praise and prayer in the name of Jesus. Just as her long and painful depression was healed in a very simple way, working for the peace that God showed her was also simple.

Now let me conclude her story. What I want to put emphasis on is not only the miraculous event happened to her, but also the fact that dreaming in Christ always brings the power of God into the earth. And it will be an absolute healing to men and the earth. Her story testifies that.

Today, countries are fighting each other, and nations rise against nations. The whole world is afraid of the big wars which has not foreseen in the past, might happen. Natural disasters, gun issues, food crisis, economic collapse, and so many problems are piled up in this land.

However, the Bible says that now is the time to see visions and dream dreams in Christ.

As your dream and vision resonates with God's desire, His great work will be manifested even in the midst of this catastrophic age, and it's also going to be our hope.

Lastly, I would like to proclaim God's grand dream which is described in the scriptures of Joel. That is this: "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

It says "Whoever." "Whoever" means no matter who. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This hope of unlimited salvation has been given and accomplished in the cross of Jesus Christ, and it shall be displayed in this end time.

We all will see visions and dream dreams when we worship God in spirit and truth. It is the vision and dream of His everlasting salvation. We will see the vision that the redeeming love of Christ pouring out on wounded lands and people.

The time will surely come when whoever calls on the name of the Lord everywhere shall be saved.

July 3, 2022

## **A New Beginning Is Starting**

*from the Regional Worship Service in Chicago*

Nodoka Kobayashi

In the service on July 3rd, I was deeply moved and astonished. Especially while singing 'Shaloha' to our God. I could feel the positive energy surrounding us. After the service, I've heard that many people have been moved and that

it was a great experience. I really like singing praises so it was really fun. It made me happy. I felt like I was a part of something, something special.

I personally like the phrase ‘Fill me with Your love and light.’ Since I was little, I was very shy and didn’t like to get attention from my classmates or my teachers. I would sit in the very back away from my teacher so I would not get called out to answer the questions. So this phrase gives me courage. I don’t think that’s how it is supposed to work but it heals me.

It was a very valuable experience with many new people joining us and learning how Kohitsuji no Mure came to be.

After hearing about the testimony of one person’s encounter with Jesus Christ, a thought came to me once again. “God will always be with you.” These words gives me confidence and encouragement.

Even if I am alone physically, I no longer am sad. I smile more and am very happy that my parents came to know Kohitsuji no Mure, because it gave me a new perspective of people’s life, including myself.

I am really glad I came to this service. I feel like a new beginning is starting.

July 3, 2022

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