

Vision of Praise

July 2015

From the editor

This month we would like to share with you Pastor Peter's message "AMETSUCHI" at the New York worship service on May, 2015.

AMETSUCHI

Peter

♪ *Ametsuchi kozorite Shu wo homeyo!*
(Japanese)

Heaven and earth, come, bless the Lord!

♪ *I ke kumu o ka lipo hō 'omālamalama*
Kēla mea kēia mea 'oli i ke Akua
I ka lani me ka honua hō 'oli 'oli
(Hawai'ian)

Let there be light in the chaos of the Creation.
All creation, praise the Lord!
Heaven and earth, make a joyful noise!

"Ametsuchi Kozorite" is our latest *heavenly praise*. I have never heard such a mysterious praise as this. The resounding tune of this praise is quite unique among over one thousand *heavenly praises* given since the year 2000.

Ametsuchi is ancient Japanese wording which means "heaven and earth," denoting the whole universe.

Japanese language has the three sources of words: native Japanese words called *Yamato kotoba*, *kango* deriving from Chinese, and *gairaigo* adapted from foreign languages.

Yamato kotoba, native Japanese words, is so ancient that a majority of us are no longer aware of its remote origin. Yet, I believe it is deeply rooted in our souls. This *heavenly praise*, “Ametsuchi Kozorite,” sings, “Heaven and earth, come, bless the Lord.”

When this praise was introduced a few weeks ago, many of us were quite surprised at its resounding tune, saying, “How ancient it sounds!” It seems to bring the deceased souls to the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. No doubt we are now praising the Lord with those who were here on the earth in the ancient times.

Sound weird?

It is written, however, in the Bible:

At the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Philippians 2:10-11 NAS)

“Under the earth,” it says. This, I believe, is the key word to see the new dimension of worship.

For centuries Christians have read the above scripture without really knowing its meaning. But now God has revealed the deep mystery of His kingdom hidden in history. “Under the earth” does not denote fantasy like J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Middle-earth*. “Those who are in heaven” are of course people who are accepted into the heaven by faith in the Lord Jesus, and “those who are on earth” are you and me, especially those who believe in the Redeemer while on earth. Christian churches, however, traditionally excluded anyone who did not subscribe to the doctrine and dogma of Christ’s salvation. Moreover, they paid little attention to those who

are confined “under the earth.”

To be honest with you, the reality of those who are “under the earth” was unknown to us until two years ago. It was revealed when we went to Spain to have our praise concerts. One of the concerts was held at the Santa Maria del Mar Church in Barcelona. It was an old enormous building, in which you can feel the historical weight of Europe in the middle ages. We had held a praise concert here three years before. Since it was our second time, we thought everything would run smoothly as the previous time.

When the choir was rehearsing, Mitsuko, the concert director, seemed to be troubled and perplexed. “Why isn’t the singing resounding forward?” She tried numerous ways to bring out the voices of the choir – to no avail. Nothing seemed to work. What is this? What happened to our choir? It was the same old cathedral as three years before. Huge as it was, last time the praise had resounded beautifully without any problem.

Finally Mitsuko went behind the choir. Can you believe what she saw? She was aghast at the scene behind the choir. A great number of people, invisible people I mean, wearing a black hooded mantle gathered there to hear the heavenly music. They were absorbing the resounding tune as if sucking life itself. No wonder the voices of the choir weren’t resounding forward but rather backward!

She did not know what to make of the unfolding development. Hearing what she saw, however, none of us thought it was her weird imagination. We simply prayed that the Lord who knew the situation might bring His glory to the concert. The concert on that evening turned out to be very successful. The presentation of *heavenly praise* was beautiful and celestial. The presence of God was so warm and so

magnificent.

Upon returning to Japan, I took time to do a little research and found out some information. During the 15th and 16th centuries, Europe went into a religious frenzy as the Protestant movement rose above the horizon. Notably the most infamous one was the Spanish Inquisition, where the Roman Catholic Church carried on the unspeakable crime against humanity. They arrested Jews, Protestants, and anyone in suspicion and executed them with no mercy. The Santa Maria del Mar Church in Barcelona was the center of the ferocious imprisonment of many captives.

I had no prior knowledge of the historical fact. Upon learning it, however, I realized how marvelous the love of the Lord was. The vision that Mitsuko saw at the church was to show the redeeming love of Christ for those rejected by the established churches. The darkness needs to be dealt with the light of God. All people who were imprisoned in history certainly have the right to be justified through the redeeming love of God.

I am not condemning just the Roman Catholic Church for what they did in the name of God. Protestants also exercised brutal massacres in history. There was no excuse, no way to justify what Christian churches have done in the name of the Lord.

We are standing here, however, not as judges to denounce the past. Having been forgiven my own sins, I simply pray that God's healing love may cover all people, not only victims but also wrongdoers. May there be God's healing and reconciliation for all people, both the believers and the unbelievers.

Of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Philippians 2:10-11 NAS)

The time has come. Yes, now is the time for the above confession to be realized. The Christ-confession will be proclaimed all over the universe by those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

Jesus Christ has destroyed the great barrier which separated the souls in heaven and the souls under the earth. The gulf and schism were done away with in Christ, for He died for all mankind. The salvation of Jesus Christ should not be limited only to Christendom. His redemption was once for all. Even for those who were against Jesus Christ, God has opened up His forgiveness, His healing, and His salvation.

Knowing God's ultimate desire, I now proclaim that the new era has come. God in Jesus Christ has reconciled the whole universe to Himself. Perfect in everything, and perfect for everyone. That's the redemption of God.

Ametsuchi kozorite Shu wo homeyo. Heaven and the earth, come, bless the Lord.

Not only the visible but also the invisible are participating in worshipping Christ the Lord. God's ultimate purpose for the whole creation is for us, the created ones, to worship the Lord God in spirit and truth. Life is being evolved into the perfect Love, the redeeming Love of Christ.

Thanks to the Lord, we are in the middle of God's divine evolution, being transformed into the image of the Son of God.

Perfect in everything, indeed.

♪Heaven and earth, come, bless the Lord!

Can you not hear someone praising the Lord together with you? *Heavenly praise* it is. Tune yourself into the cosmic resounding sound, and you shall truly live.

Heaven and earth are united as one to worship Jesus Christ our Lord God. May His life, His love, and His healing be upon all creation from now on and to the ends of the earth. Amen.

May 24, 2015 at New York Worship Service

Kohitsuji no Mure Christian Church

3-25 Yoko-cho, Ashiya, Hyogo 659-0034 Japan

URL:<https://kohitsuji.com/english>