

Vision of Praise

November 2018

From the editor

This time we would like to share Pastor Peter's special message, "Forgiven, Utterly Forgiven –New Life Embracing the Past–," given on June 6, 2021 in the Church of the Wind worship service.

May the transcending love of God reach even to the history of all the world.

Forgiven, Utterly Forgiven

New Life Embracing the Past

Peter

♪ *Heaven and earth, bless the Lord!*

Come, bless the Lord!

Heaven and earth together bless the Lord.

Right by my side, a long-haired woman in the Heian period is standing and praising the Lord. Such a vivid image comes to me. Over there, a group of samurai warriors are praising the Lord on their knees. And far away, ancient people in the Jomon and Yayoi periods are assembling for Cosmic Worship and praising the Lord. Looking closely, I see not only Japanese but also Western knights and kings mesmerized by praise and adoring the Lord. What an incredible time it is that we now worship together also with the invisible, those in heaven, on the earth, under the earth and in the sea! How amazing!

Dream Bestowed by God

“Peter’s Correspondence” (my private newsletter) is receiving responses from many people. Nowadays many of them testify that their deceased mothers, fathers and friends are praising Christ together. It is not mere imagination.

Clearly, we have entered a new era. Those in heaven are gathering in the worship on the earth. Heaven has waited for this time, as well as we on the earth. The long-awaited blissful time of worship has come.

At the end of the book of Revelation, it says:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”(Revelation 21:1-5)

Now is such a time. A new time has come. The old things have passed away, and New Jerusalem is manifesting itself. New Jerusalem is not only our joy on the earth but also the joy and healing of those in heaven. Healing continues even after death. And now healing in heaven seems speeding

up.

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

(Revelation 22:1-2)

The word “healing” here indicates that heaven also has those to be healed. There are many who finished their life on the earth by halves and did not clearly recognize Christ. However, the time of consummation is near. The healing of Christ is to be poured over those people. Now is the time for them to have clear recognition. The healing of Christ shall be consummated at last.

As we congregate and praise the cross of Christ each Sunday, and as we hold the Holy Communion also at home, the resounding of praise multiplies greatly in heaven, thus leading many souls to join our praise.

Occasionally I hear some people say, “Nobody comes to my house gathering. It is meaningless to continue this. I will quit it.” When you enter the spiritual dimension, you will say, “What a foolish thing I did!” You will not regret anything more than this. What you should never do is shut the door of your gathering.

Your house gathering is, so to speak, a lighthouse. As your light fades away, a multitude of souls start to wander about. Your gathering is not for your joy alone. It is a lighthouse to lead those souls to return to the Redeemer Jesus Christ. The time is accelerating.

“And it shall be in the last days,” God says, “That I

will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” (Act 2:17)

Now is the “last days” when God pours forth His Spirit on all mankind, so our sons and daughters shall prophesy, and our young men shall see visions, and our old men shall dream dreams. When we age in Christ, this privilege awaits: We shall dream dreams bestowed by God.

A dream was given to me when I was young. It was vague at first, but now has become clear. To put it into words, it is the dream that heaven and earth become one and praise Christ together, as written in the Revelation. Now is the last days when many frightening things are happening, but this is an era to see the climax of what is prophesied in the Bible. We are living in the days when we shall dream God’s dreams. What an amazing time has come!

A great multitude of people must have dreamed this dream. And now in this hour, it is becoming reality.

Praise-Centered Church

It was more than fifty years ago when I was living in Philadelphia.

In the late 1960s, when America was deeply involved in the Vietnam War, the Jesus movement appeared in California on the West Coast among the counterculture youth, so-called hippies. They were dressed in filthy clothes, indulging in drugs and sex. Yet many of them suddenly confessed to believe in Jesus Christ and arose to follow Him, thus starting the revolutionary movement.

The Jesus movement was not on such a small scale as dozens of people. Hundreds of people were baptized in the Pacific Ocean every month, and they praised the Lord, raising their hands. Such stunning scenes were widely reported by the media.

The movement received coverage from the secular press and the big three television networks such as NBC. In 1971 it was featured as the cover story by famed Time magazine. The flames of the Holy Spirit, which had started in the West, spread across the entire nation and reached the East Coast. The Jesus movement had nationwide growth among not only hippies but the large youth population. The rally in Dallas, Texas is said to have gathered 180,000 young people for its gospel music festival, which became the cover of Life magazine.

All over the places young people praised Jesus Christ, and on Sundays went to church in their filthy clothes. The established churches were so startled that not a few refused them, but the churches that gladly welcomed them surely prospered and received spiritual blessings.

In the beginning of the 1960s, the Charismatic movement already started in the established churches. The outpouring of the Spirit was happening on a smaller scale everywhere in America.

One of them was the Upper Octorara Presbyterian Church in Parkesburg, Pennsylvania, about an hour's drive from Philadelphia. A traditional Presbyterian church it was, but its Saturday night prayer and praise service had an ecumenical attendance. Rev. James Brown (also an assistant professor of the Lincoln Theological Seminary), having experienced the Holy Spirit together with his wife, started the Saturday night service with several people, which soon

attracted people from all denominations, even the Catholic Church.

The large sanctuary was filled with the voices of praise. There was no program or printed matter. When the time came, Rev. Brown would start to sing, “Praise the Lord!” tapping the tambourine. To it the congregation would respond. As it ceased, the next song started. Then suddenly someone prayed aloud, and over there another was speaking in tongues. It was really free. I was still young at the time, and got surprised at how free in America! I later learned that it was very exceptional even in America. No other place had such free service.

The Charismatic movement also attracted many businessmen, and they held gatherings in places like hotels across the country. It was around that time when the healing evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman was actively working.

Most unique was the praise worship of the Episcopal church in Houston, Texas—the Church of the Redeemer. It was in the inner city, the run-down area of past glory. Its neighborhood was no longer a suburban residential area, and its membership was declining. As whites moved out, blacks and Hispanics were coming in.

Since I spent my student days in the slums of Philadelphia, I well understand how it was. The Vietnam War evoked a decadent atmosphere in American cities. In those days they were filled with drugs and violence. The neighborhood of the Church of the Redeemer must have been no exception.

The pastor of the church, knowing the flames of the Holy Spirit ignited in New York, drove there all the way from Houston. He must have been thirsty spiritually, and there he received the fullness of the Spirit. After he came

back in exultation, healings and miracles started taking place. His church became aflame with the Spirit.

Then what happened? White people, who had left the area, returned to the community and worshipped together. So-called professionals (doctor and lawyer) as well as businessmen started to live around the church and serve the community. A medical clinic was opened too. The crime rate in the area went down, and the land values rose. The Redeemer Church was deemed as ideal in the Charismatic movement.

Around the time, I had a summer retreat with several Japanese people in the Pocono Mountains, Northeastern Philadelphia. My old friend, Christine let us use her cottage, and we had a wonderful time.

One evening Christine said, “Peter, I want you to listen to this praise,” and played a record. It was “God’s People Give Thanks” released by the Redeemer Church in Houston.

How beautiful! It was a live recording of the Episcopal mass. Their original songs were good, but what astounded me was a simple praise “Alleluia” by Jerry Sinclair which was well-known as the symbolic praise of the Charismatic movement in America. Now I will have it played here, so please listen.

♪ Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia …

It is amazingly beautiful as if angels were singing in heaven!

As I listened to this praise in the record at the time, I was dreaming a mysterious dream:

“In my lifetime, before dying, I wish to see a church of praise on the earth, specifically in Japan. The center of the church is not a pastor or doctrine, but praise of the Lord. Yes,

I will build a church of praise!”

When I heard “Alleluia” sung in the Redeemer Church, the purpose of my life was made clear. What was needed was a church centered on praise, not on biblical knowledge, sermons or people. It would not be one more church built in Japan; the church of heavenly praise would reveal itself.

It was my dream of fifty years ago.

Hearing me say, “I want to build a church filled with beautiful praise,” my wife laughed, saying, “How can the one who sings out of tune build such a church?” It was not my dream, however. It was God’s dream. And now in my old age, I realize that the dream of God has come true. The Heavenly Praise resounds from the Church of the Wind to the whole universe, and it is far purer, far higher, far deeper and far wider than I envisioned. It all started with “Alleluia” sung in the Redeemer Church.

First Heavenly Praise

The outpouring of the Heavenly Praise started with “Holy, Alleluia” on January 17, 2000, which continues still today. To tell the truth, a few pieces had appeared even before the year 2000, which you may know if you have been in Kohitsuji no Mure since the early stage.

The only person enjoying it was Hatoko (Mitsuko’s nickname, meaning a dove child). What a luxury it was to enjoy the Heavenly Praise all by herself!

In 1992 we started to hold our annual US retreat at Stony Point Center in New York. The facility was not so fine at the time, and we could barely sleep in a room with the walls so thin as to overhear voices of the next room. It was

during the 5th retreat in 1996. One morning I heard a voice coming from the next room. It sounded like Mitsuko singing.

Singing was not her cup of tea. After the White Dove incident she had willingly joined my gatherings in New Jersey, but mumbled inwardly, “I want to hear a sermon. Never mind about praise.” And now she was singing!

Intuitively I thought, “What is that?! I can’t let it go.” I knocked on her door, asked her to come out, and had someone who knew music take it down in musical notation right then and there.

It was the morning of July 14, 1996.

Thanks to that transcription, the praise “In the Beginning” (from John 1:1-5) made an appearance. Indeed, it was the first Heavenly Praise appearing on the earth. That was the momentous day. Not everyone appreciated the praise, however. When it was introduced in the retreat, people’s reaction was not much enthusiastic. Some even said, “Isn’t it childish?” or “Sounds like children’s song.” The only person moved by it was Yuki (a staff worker Yuki Shibuta).

♪ In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things were made through Him,
and without Him nothing was made
that was made.
In Him was life,
and the life was the light of men.
And the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not comprehend it.

It makes me fondly remember that day!

This was not merely a new praise song. I was not aware then, but it was the very start of the realization of my dream. I could not verbalize it then, but it was the very beginning of Cosmic Worship. Without it, Cosmic Worship may not have been manifested.

In 2000, “Holy, Alleluia” became the first piece of the flood of the Heavenly Praise, which was not man-made beautiful praise, but celestial praise coming down straight from heaven. Praise has been infinitely flowing, and before I knew, it is far more heavenly and beautiful than the praise sung in the Redeemer Church which used to be my ideal.

Last week, after a long time, I visited the website of the Church of the Redeemer in Houston. I wondered how the church so spirited and socially influential was doing now.

And I was deeply shocked. The Redeemer Church had declined, and the building was sold and in a ruinous condition now. Oh, no! What had happened to that Charismatic community? What had become of the beautiful praise?

Searching on the Internet, I learned of sad news. The Church of the Redeemer, having flourished in the Charismatic movement, was struck by a scandal. The leader of the church turned out to be homosexual, having an affair with a man. He himself admitted it.

After all, the churches in America, especially evangelical, are legalistic. They viciously attack homosexuality, asserting that it is the devil’s work. It is nothing but an abomination to them that a church leader is homosexual.

Those rejoicing people left one by one, and the church went downhill.

In knowing this, my first reaction was, “There was no Hatoko (Mitsuko) in the Redeemer Church.”

Recently we received a question, “What is the stance of Kohitsuji no Mure on homosexuality? Are you for it or against it?” I wrote my response to this question.¹

Kohitsuji no Mure is neither for nor against homosexuality. We stand on our faith in praise.

As far as I am concerned, I question why only homosexuality is picked up as an especially evil deed and as a scandal. Where in the Bible is it written so? Liars, sorcerers, murderers, thieves, drunkards, revilers, the coward, the covetous ... all are sinners. Sin is sin, and there is no differentiation.

If any of you say, “I have a right to accuse sins,” please come to me. In this big wide world, if there is anyone who thinks, “I am qualified to denounce homosexuals, for I am without sin,” come right out and say.

You may not be homosexual, but have you not lied even once? Have you not been jealous and not quarreled with others? Even after becoming a Christian, you must have sinned hundreds of times. No one can claim, “I am pure and sinless.” The Bible says there is none righteous, not even one.

You are here now simply because of the mercy of the cross of Christ and His forgiveness. That is all there is to it. And yet when did you become a judge? There should be no one qualified to be a judge.

We have been forgiven, utterly forgiven. Are we not the ones thrilled by the love of the cross? I will not go beyond it. No need to do so.

The Redeemer Church declined, and so did most of the churches having similarly rejoiced in the Charismatic

movement.

You may say, “Kohitsuji no Mure should not make a silly blunder like that. Let us learn from others’ mistakes and go forward without repeating the same error.”

Don’t say foolish things. Cosmic Worship is not given for us alone to be wise or admirable. We are called to Cosmic Worship for Christ’s redemption to cover all creation.

Beginning of the New Century

Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?”

They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.

Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.”
(John 8:2-11)

The Jews brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus. “Teacher, we caught her in the very act of adultery. The law commands us to stone this woman. Do You say we should?” they asked. Jesus did not respond. As they persistently asked, He simply said:

“Okay. He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”

Beginning with the older ones, they went away one by one, leaving her alone. Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” She said, “No one, Lord.”

“I do not condemn you, either.”

This is our Savior.

“Go. Sin no more.” Let me interpret this in my words.

“Now, you are made new mankind. Live the rest of your life in the joy of being utterly forgiven.”

You have been forgiven with no qualification. Do not go beyond it. You are totally forgiven. Do not step out of it. We are privileged to have Cosmic Worship. Therefore, let us invite all others.

There are many people I want to invite. One is Kenji Miyazawa,² an ardent believer of Nichiren Buddhism who was seeking cosmic unity. “Kenji, here is what you dreamed of. Now you can touch it.” Another is Shusaku Endo.³ “Shusaku, you no longer need to look so obliquely. There is the One who stands right in front of you and embraces you. Rest in His love.” And Hideo Kobayashi,⁴ whom I regard as my mentor. “You could not reach with your intelligence, but look, here is the absolute love that your soul ardently quested for.”

Invite your deceased fathers, mothers and friends to

Cosmic Worship where the love of Christ overflows.

Redeemer Church, I say to you, “There is no such thing as failure. Condemnation of this world has no power in the kingdom of God. There is no regret in the praise of God. Both you and I are forgiven by Christ, so we simply praise the Lord. We shall live not by deeds but by His grace alone.”

People of the Redeemer Church, thanks to you, I was awakened to praise. Without your praise, the Church of the Wind would not have taken form. Even if people condemn you as dirty sinners, I will not condemn you. Thanks to you, I have come to know how wide, deep and magnificent Christ’s redemption is. Therefore, I will prepare the VIP seats to welcome you.

Nothing ends in vain. Nothing is to be regretted. All creation, Cosmic Worship is now open for you. Christ’s redeeming love shall envelop all created. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

His precious blood was shed for us. Without His blood, there would have been no forgiveness of sins. The Lamb of God shed His blood to heal all stains, resentments, sins and illnesses.

A new century has begun. It is a new era when God dwells among us. Children, you are the first fruits. Deliver the life of the Lamb to all the earth. A new time has come.

from Sunday worship in the Church of the Wind
on June 6, 2021

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