

*From the editor*

For this issue, let us share a report from the Bible Study in the Wilderness in April, "I Am Willing to Die for You" by Michael Fujii, a house church leader in California.

May God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead also fill your heart with His resurrected life in praise.

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## I Am Willing to Die for You

Michael Fujii

### **The Theme of *Bible Study in the Wilderness*:**

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

(John 11:25-26)

Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead. What does His resurrection mean to you?

First of all when I first came to Kohitsuji no Mure church I had a hard time because their focus or perspective was not like a traditional church. For me at Kohitsuji no Mure church everything seemed so foreign but as I started to get familiar with the church, I started thinking it is so refreshing. It was not only refreshing but somehow I knew instantly it was built on truth. I became definitely intrigued to learn more. Clearly I felt my world was getting recalibrated and somewhere deep inside of me I realized I always wanted the truth.

Unfortunately, just the knowledge of the truth didn't get me to cross the bridge of belief. For many years I still had doubts. I would hear the church vision, "Everything is

completed in Praise,” but I did not know what it meant. I couldn’t explain it but there was a gap that I wasn’t able to cross over.

Still, one thing was certain: I knew I had found the church I could worship. An accumulation of events in my life along with hearing the living testimonies during worship from everyday people let me experience the presence of Jesus. One very unique thing about this church was that people who led the worship weren’t only those who were trained at the seminaries but also ordinary people. Some people who attended the worship would eventually become leaders of their own house church and hold their worships at their homes.

These were people who were being healed and simply filled with joy after encountering His presence. The astounding thing was that the church had a strong belief that Jesus led all the worships and that He was in full control of everything.

It was these astounding perspectives or faith of the church that intrigued me.

Normally, churches being governed by humans tend to control things within their own effort and control. However Kohitsuji no Mure would see the overall beauty encompassing the imperfections along with the perfections, all of it as God’s perfect creation. Isn’t this what faith in God is all about??

I wasn’t sure if it had to do with being a skeptic. Clearly I wanted to believe, yet I was still having a hard time coming to believe in the vision of the church, “Everything is completed in Praise.”

But through the presence of God, I did believe that there were no such things as coincidences.

### Intrigued by the Drumming “Tombak”

Three years later, I was introduced to the Tombak, an ancient Middle Eastern drum, which became like a hearing aid

device for me, a means to communicate to Heaven directly. I was immediately interested and attracted to the deep vibration. I believe Jesus intervened to help me cross over the bridge. I cannot explain it, but the vibration of the Tombak spoke to me almost in a form of language. I ended up purchasing a Tombak drum for myself and couldn't get my hand from beating it or hitting it. The vibration would speak to me. I would hear an intonation of continuous sound like a humming, as if hearing a conversation in Heaven. I did not know what it meant. Then one day I mimicked the sound to my Persian friend Kamran (my Tombak drum master), and to my surprise he told me what it meant. The sound or words, "Ti jaan-e braa twokeh maraa kooshtei," uttered from my mouth. I have no understanding of what I just said and asked Kamran if it meant anything to him.

When I told him about the foreign words that were uttered from me, he was astonished. I remembered him chuckling at first. He started explaining that he recognized the language to be Rashti, saying, "Rashti is like a dialect or kind of like speaking with a southern accent. It is a prominent dialect of the Gilaki language, a Northwestern Iranian language spoken in the Gilan province near the Caspian Sea." I guess hearing me speaking in this dialect sounded a bit humorous.

According to Kamran this phrase projects the deepest expression of love. The literal translation is, "My dear brother, because of my pure love for you, you killed me."

I told Kamran I felt Jesus was conveying these words to me. I felt these words were speaking about the cross of Jesus Christ. I felt Jesus was saying, "My dear brother, I love you so much that I am willing to die for you."

In a strange way I somehow felt that the vision of the church, "Everything is completed in Praise" is synonymous with the resurrection of Christ. Perhaps I was having a hard

time believing that Mitsuko was actually hearing these praises in Heaven and transcribing them so that we can sing them here on earth. But I actually had a similar experience through the Tombak drum. The words, “Ti jaan-e braa twokeh maraa kooshte, My dear brother, I love you so much that I am willing to die for you,” are forever branded in my heart.

Only a few days after this profound experience, as I was drumming a praise, “Kami ni Kaere” (Return to God) from Isaiah 55:1-5, I felt Jesus was asking me to hit the skin of the drum as if I was to whip Jesus as He hung on the cross. I remember responding, “I won’t, and I can’t!” But Jesus said, “If you don’t, you cannot be saved.” It was like I traveled through time and found myself before Jesus as He was hung on the cross. Reluctantly I remember hitting the drum continuously as hard as I could. It was then, I knew I was the sinner who crucified Jesus on the cross. It was then I had the most amazing experience as I was hitting the skin of the drum. The very instant my fingers touched the skin of the drum, I felt my sin instantly gone and at the very same instance I was renewed as if made brand new.

I was completely healed, filled with His brilliant light. There was this explainable joy and love.

For the first time I started to see the significance in the Heavenly Praise. I realize Jesus lives in the Heavenly Praise. But even more important was the realization that the cross of Jesus, His death and resurrection Is in the Heavenly Praise.



*Tombak*

## Encounter with God's True Love

Believe it or not, even after this I was still asking for more tangible proof from the Lord.

So I thought if I did something wrong or bad, Jesus would punish me and then I would surmise His existence is more believable. I decided to go on a rampage of disapproving or proving His existence by lying and cheating, trying to get a reaction from Jesus.

At this time I had no idea what I was asking the Lord to do, when I begged Him to punish or hurt me.

However, whenever I begged Him to punish me, the only thought that consistently came to me was, "Do whatever you like. I am with you always." This went on for three years. I just kept persistent with my dubious ways.

Then one day it happened! I knew this was the punishment I had been begging Jesus to do. I would become blind through a condition called, "Retinal Detachment."

It was strange because for some reason I was at peace and calm. I remember Mitsuko and Pastor Peter praying for me over the phone.

Mitsuko said, "I believe everything will be okay." The only possible fix for it was an emergency surgery so it had to be scheduled for the very next day. It would be at the clinic and not at the hospital, in other words the doctor would numb around my eye but no general anesthesia. It was about 4 to 5 hours long. I had a high degree of pain tolerance. However, this was the most excruciating pain

I had ever felt. I remember Mimi, my wife came to pick me up, and as I stepped off from the reclining surgical chair, I just collapsed from the pain. I remember on the way home crying not from the pain but because I felt the Love of God so deeply.

At that moment I realized I had asked God to have His son die for my sins. Out of God's and Jesus' unconditional Love He did it. What an impossible request I had been asking Him and just how difficult it must have been for Him to let me go through it, not only that but also to watch His loved one go through pain.

God's love for us and God's love for Jesus is infinite and unmeasurable.

Certainly, it was so evident how limited my love or man's love is. That's why if we are going to love, it must be in Jesus' love.

The words from John 3:16-17, spoke to me in a way I never knew before.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

(John 3:16-17 NKJ)

The words from Isaiah 55:1-3 especially speak to me.

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.

(Isaiah 55:1-3 NIV)

The words, "Ti jaan-e braa twokeh maraa kooshtei," has

given new meaning again for me now. I say this to the Lord, “My Dear Brother, because of Your redemptive love, I live in You. Thank You for Your Unconditional Love.”

Since Jesus let me experience His love through His death and resurrection on the cross to this degree, He whipped away my doubts. The direct teaching the Lord bestowed in me is His gift of eternal love. Though I stumble here and there, I will always have a place to return to. I know I will praise Him till the day I die.

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