

From the editor

For this issue, we would like to share a testimony of the victory over death from the Memorial Worship 2025 in Hawaii, "The Joy of Living in Eternity" by Rieko Morikawa, a house church leader in Hawaii.

May the resurrected life of Jesus fill you in our worship which makes heaven and earth as one in Christ.

The Joy of Living in Eternity

Rieko Morikawa (Hawaii)

Death Is Not the End

I was assured that "death is not the end," through the death of my husband, Raymond. I believe he is now returned to heaven and talking to me, "I want to share the same thing." Now the dividing wall between life and death has been taken away and vanished. My husband and I both want to share with you the joy of living in eternity.

I am happy to worship God in harmony with all of creation, as it is written in the scripture of Philippians.

At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Philippians 2:10-11 NKJ)

The life flowing from heaven is the eternal life of Jesus. When I give praise, I know eternal life flows within me, and I am filled with living joy. Worship has become a place where God's love and our love for God overflow.

I have always been uninterested in religion since I was small and lived believing in only what I could see.

Regarding death, it terrified me more than anything else from a very young age. No matter how hard you try, no matter how much money you have, no matter how much you rely on doctors, death is something beyond human power. And death comes to everyone without exception. If someone standing right in front of me died, he would vanish from this world. When I was five or six years old, my family was my entire world. Just the thought of my family dying and vanishing from this world filled me with dread.

When I grew up, my mother suddenly passed away from heart disease. On my way to the hospital, when I realized that now she was no longer there, all the strength drained out of my body and I felt as if I had been plunged into complete darkness. At that time, I had not yet met Jesus.

Encountering Jesus Who Lives in Praise

I met Jesus after I came to Hawaii and got married. I came to Hawaii on a vacation when I was 23 years old, and I was instantly captivated by the blue sky, white clouds, palm trees, refreshing breeze, sparkling emerald green sea, Diamond Head, rainbows.... It was a world I had never seen before. So I visited Hawaii every year, and on one summer day, I met and got married with a younger third-generation Japanese American boy, Raymond. We hit it off and decided to get married within a week. We were married in Hawaii the following spring.

My husband truly cherished me. We had two children and we lived the happiest life I could even imagine.

But then, the fear of death that had dwelt within me since childhood began to stir. I thought: This happiness can't last forever. If my husband died in an accident, if our children fell critical ill and died, I'd be plunged into the depths of misery in

an instant.... Around that time, I was invited to a Christian home gathering. I was not much interested in Christianity, yet I found myself drawn into the Bible.

I learned that if I was baptized, I would receive eternal life and go to heaven to be reunited with my family! I couldn't believe such a wonderful thing existed. My joy and amazement were beyond words. I was urged to be baptized, so I opened the bible for the first time and started reading Luke.

And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."
(Luke 18:29-30 NAS)

I stumbled upon this verse and felt God speaking to me "Leave your family and follow Me." I thought, "No, I met my husband and found happiness. I have two children now and am so happy. I don't want to leave this family to follow Christ." So I refused.

That very night, I recalled the story of Abraham. When Abraham obeyed God and was about to sacrifice his only son Isaac as a burnt offering, God intervened and saved Isaac. (Genesis Chapter 22) I thought, "That's it! If I obey God, He will never abandon my family!" So I was baptized in April 1987. From then on, wanting to know more about God, I studied the Bible, and attended church almost daily. I enjoyed church life in a way. However, no matter how much I studied, I couldn't grasp Jesus' love.

In 1996, Pastor Peter and Mitsuko came to Hawaii for missionary work, and through the worship they led, I encountered Jesus who lives in praise. The joy of rejoicing in the Lord overflowed in my heart. From then on, I praised day and night and began gathering at Kohitsuji no Mure where I felt

His presence in the midst of praises.

In December 1999, I became a house church leader of Kohitsuji no Mure Church and started house church gatherings. I was truly happy that a window of praise had opened even in my home.

As we praised, I could almost see white doves carrying love on their wings, delivering it to the wounded and the sorrowful people. Soon after, I also started an English gathering once a month, and my husband also began to join there.

“Believe in Me”

About two years later, my husband had a heart attack and was diagnosed as needing a heart transplant. We had to move to Minnesota for the critical surgery. My husband stayed in a stable condition with new medical care, and we waited for the transplant while praising the Lord.

But after half a year, his heart reached its limit, and the doctor said it might be too late. Although I replied, “he will be fine once he gets the transplant,” a wave of anxiety hit me immediately.

One day, as I walked down the hallway, a gentle voice came from the pitch-black darkness behind me: “Believe in Me.” I knew immediately, “It’s Jesus!” “My husband will get the heart transplant, and he will live.” With this conviction, I was transformed from darkness into light.

But his condition worsened. Just as I thought the time had come to accept his death, even though I don’t remember where I opened the Bible, the page I was reading was filled with the words “death.” As I thought, “Oh, I don’t want to read this passage,” then the word “life” suddenly jumped out at me. So I began reading intently. It was an urgent message from the Lord, delivered to me standing on the edge of a cliff.

For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. (Roman 14:7-9 NIV)

“Does none of us live for ourselves, and none of us dies for ourselves?” Whether we live or die, are we not the Lord’s?” Since both my husband and I belong to Jesus, even if he dies and goes to heaven, does that mean he’ll worship Jesus in heaven? Since I worship Jesus on earth, we are connected through Him! My husband will continue to live in heaven without dying! Wow!

For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. (Roman 14:9 NIV)

Through this verse, God showed me that the love of the cross.

When the doctor told me it might be too late, the words Jesus spoke to me in the pitch-black darkness —“Believe in Me”— I understood they were the very words of the scripture.

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this? (John 11:25-26 NKJ)

I do believe in it. I have encountered life that lives in eternity! The miracle I received was not the heart transplant arrived in time. But He showed me an unimaginable miracle: life that lives even after death.

The moment my husband drew his last breath around 2 o’clock after midnight, I just moved to the waiting room to lie down for a moment. But I was astonished to see my husband

appeared before me. He wore a long white robe and large angelic wings. With arms spread wide, he said, “This is not comfortable.” Hearing that, I thought, “Well, of course!” He was a Hawaiian local boy who’d lived his whole life in T-shirts, jeans, and flip-flops. I believe that he came to show me that he had begun living in the new life of resurrection! Death was not the end! Through my husband’s illness and death, Jesus showed me the life of resurrection. He freed me from the fear of death I had carried since childhood. Hallelujah to the Lord who conquered death on the cross!

I came to know the love of Jesus that does not let sorrow end in sorrow alone. There is nothing more painful, sorrowful, and unbearable than facing the death of a cherished family member, a close friend, or a beloved pet. But Jesus gave us the hope and joy that “even in death, we live.” Those left behind need not to be remain crushed by grief forever. Thank You, Lord, for the joy of heaven and earth becoming one.

Now, my husband has moved to heaven on an assignment, working energetically at the Lord’s side, and we worship the Lord together in Cosmic Worship.

Celebration of the Risen Life

Pastor Peter had written the title “Celebration of the Risen Life with Raymond” on his funeral program. Since he lives on even though his body is gone, there was no sorrow but only joy and gratitude. Five or six staff members came from Japan for the funeral. We sang “O Virgin Israel” with a drum and finger cymbals before the 300 attendees. The hall was filled with praises, overflowing with the joy of resurrected life. Following my husband’s will to have his ashes scattered at sea, we boarded a catamaran and sailed to the waters off Diamond Head. Amidst the sound of the tambourine and the echoing praise, we scattered his ashes and vibrant red Hawaiian petals into the blue Hawaiian

sea. We were thankful to be able to mark the beginning of his journey into the life of resurrection.

How much have I been protected and saved by Jesus all this time? The love of Jesus Christ alone is sufficient. I am so glad that I met Jesus.

Every event in my 74 years of life—every joy and every sorrow—has been for the purpose of encountering God’s love. And I will continue to encounter God’s love from now on. Through His victory over death—something beyond human power—on the cross and His resurrection, I have come to know that no matter how painful or sorrowful things may be, the Lord will never let sorrow end in sorrow.

I am grateful that He engages with each one of us through absolute love and forgiveness, drawing us to Himself.

For from him and through him and for him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:36 NIV)

I am thankful that heavenly praise flows to our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, all the friends we have met, and even our pets. Nothing can escape the flood of praise pouring down from heaven.

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.
(John 17:3 NAS)

Father God, we pray that those suffering without knowing God’s love may encounter Jesus. In the Cosmic Worship offered by all creations, we join as one in praise and give thanks for the joy of being alive in eternity.

May the glory of the Lord fill the whole earth. Amen.

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