

Morning service 2024.6.30 (Sun.)

“Glorified Body“

Proverbs 27:17.

'Iron is sharpened by iron, and a man is sharpened by his friends.'

Today is the baptismal service. As it is a message at a baptismal service, I have prayerfully reflected on my own life of faith, preparing and rejoicing in the day.

I myself was baptized 18 years ago, in 2006, at a church in Yokosuka. I had been living a life without church until then, when I met a young man who was a Christian at a sports gym, and he led me to church and led me to baptism.

The young men welcomed me and continued to invite me to church, taught me about the Bible, taught me about church, and always prayed for me. But I think they were skeptical that a guy who was a muscle-bound idiot, who went to the sun salon and rode his motorcycle to the beach could really be saved.

I had been going to a gym and thinking that muscle training was the only way to change myself, but through encounters with people, through encounters with the church, and through encounters with Jesus, I had the amazing experience that I could change so much through encounters. I realized that people are not sharpened by iron, people are not changed by muscle training, people are sharpened by friends, and people are changed by encounters with others.

As the words of Proverbs 27:17 say. "Iron is sharpened by iron, and a man is sharpened by his friend." A person is sharpened. What do you imagine? A person being sharpened, being polished. Before I was baptized, I would have imagined a shining body, artistic, beautiful and macho in appearance. I would have pictured a figure that boasted of its own strength, boasted of its own abilities, and showed off its own strength.

However, I was taught through the youth group and the senior

Christians in the church that this was not the case. It was the opposite of being proud of one's own strength; they treated me with humility and love. I was shocked to learn that there was a way of life that was completely opposite of what I had been striving for, and I was attracted to the way of life of these young men.

This way of life was the way of life taught in the Bible. I remember being amazed at the teachings of the Bible, too, and being impressed with how amazing the Bible is, since I had only known the values of this world, which were taken for granted.

I Corinthians 13:4.

“Love is forgiving, love is kind, love is not envying. Love does not boast and is not proud.”

I, a muscle-bound fool who only knew muscle, was taught love. And that love was the opposite of muscle and strength.

Instead of the way of life that says, “Muscle is boastful and proud, and often envies others,” I was taught a new way of life in the church, by people, and by the Word.

Instead of the way of life that says, “Muscle is boastful and proud, and often envies others,” as in I Corinthians 13:4, “Love is forgiving, and love is kind, and does not envy others. Love does not boast and is not proud.” This is the kind of love that makes us want to live by the love of God.

Proverbs 27:17.

“Iron is sharpened by iron, and a man is sharpened by his friend.”

I have experienced that “man is not sharpened by iron, but man is sharpened by his friend, and man is changed by his friend”. And that friend was the friend that the Lord God gave me. God really does amazing things.

People are sharpened by their friends. It is the Lord God who gives that friend. If I had met a Christian outside of the gym, I might have at least said hello, but I don't think we would have become friends.

Because I met him at the gym, I thought that there are no bad people who like muscle training, and I could trust him and become his friend. It is a friend that God gave me.

I met Jesus through that friend. I believe that Jesus came to the gym. Jesus came to where I am, Jesus came all the way to meet me. If you look at the Bible, you can read about Jesus walking around in many places, approaching and meeting many people, but Jesus is the one who also comes to the gym. So even now, I think it is possible for Jesus to go to many places and for Jesus to approach and meet people in any place.

I met people, I met Jesus, and I was changed.

“A man is sharpened by his friends.”

Through encounters, I have continued to be changed by the relationships I have had since then, and by my relationship with Jesus. People are not sharpened by iron, but by their friends, they are sharpened, they are polished, they really shine, they grow.

I have experienced that it is not a mere muscle shine, but in the relationship between people, people shine by love, and people are created and transformed by love.

Indeed, people influence each other through conversations with friends, through time spent together. They then build that person up. They become people who are similar to their friends. Therefore, it is important to meet true friends of faith that the Lord God gives us, and most importantly, to meet Jesus.

I have been sharpened, refined, transformed, and made to grow through meeting friends in faith, spending time together in youth groups, fellowshiping at church, and sharing the Word together.

When I was a young man in Yokosuka, I was once invited to the residence of the youth leader at the time. He lived alone in an apartment. I was not used to going to a Christian friend's house, so it was very new for me. He prepared a meal for me, and of course we prayed before the meal, and while we ate, we talked about our faith, and we talked about our jobs, our future, and our service, and I

remember feeling very special at that time and thinking, "What a Christian-like person I am".

After our Christian-like time together, the youth leader led me to the next room. As I did so, I saw a room full of sticky notes on the wall. As I got closer, I saw that each sticky note had the name of the youth and their prayer requests written on it. The youth leader was praying for each youth.

I was so moved that I thought, "I just look like a Christian, but the leader is a real Christian," and he handed me a sticky note saying, "Ishida, write your prayer requests, too, and I will always pray for you".

Then we prayed for each other about our marriages and devotions. Even now, sometimes I remember the dirty apartment of the president of the youth association. I wonder if my life of faith began with that prayer with the youth leader, and as I thank God that He is truly the One who hears our prayers, I am flooded with many thoughts, wondering if Jesus, who comes to the gym, was with me in the dirty apartment.

"Iron is sharpened by iron, and man is sharpened by his friend." Since then, I myself have been sharpened and sharpened, and here I stand.

I don't know if it was good training for the young men who prayed for me and lived in the church with me, but three of my friends from the youth group at that time are now pastors.

I am reminded that we are all being sharpened by each other. I remember with nostalgia the days of the youth group when we were all rough around the edges with each other.

The center of the church fellowship that I have spent my life in has been love. I have been nurtured by love.

The words of I Corinthians 8:1 also say, "Love nurtures people". People are raised by love. Because of love, we can sharpen and grow with one another as friends in faith. If there was no love in the

church, I would have been kicked out of the church.

The church is different from the values of this world, so I think there are many unique or unusual people, as was the case with the youth group in Yokosuka. Still, we can be together because we have the same faith and love.

There is a story about a porcupine.

One day during the bitter cold of winter, a porcupine asked a family of moles to let him stay with them in their cave for the winter.

The moles gladly accede to the porcupine's request.

However, the cave was so small that when porcupine moved around in the cave, the moles were scratched by porcupine's stingers.

After patiently waiting for a while, the moles finally asked porcupine to leave the cave.

Porcupine, however, refused their request and said, "If you don't want to stay here, you can leave."

This is the story of Porcupine. What do you think?

Porcupine and the mole have decided to live together, but porcupine's needle is in the way, making it difficult for them to spend time together.

Should the mole be more patient? Or should the porcupine do as the mole asks and leave? But it seems to be comfortable for porcupine.

If so, as porcupine said back to the mole, should the mole, not wanting to be with porcupine, leave?

It is a question that makes one wonder what is best and what is the right answer.

But there is one solution.

That is to "put a blanket over the porcupine". It is a cold winter, so the porcupine will be happy. And the mole will not be scratched by the porcupine's stingers. Both the porcupine and the mole will be happy to spend time together.

We are taught to "throw a blanket over the porcupine." I believe this is similar to the love we are taught.

I Peter 4:8

First of all, love one another fervently. For love covers a multitude of sins.”

“Throw a blanket” is love that covers our weaknesses and sins. Love covers our many sins and allows us to spend time together.

I was happy to spend my time in the youth group in Yokosuka, but there were times when I didn't like meeting with them week after week, and there were times when I thought, "What a hassle!", and I had a hard time getting along with people, and eventually I thought about quitting going to church. At such times, when I would talk to the older youth about it, they would encourage me by saying, "No, you should come to church."

One young man told me that he had once asked his pastor if he should stop serving or change churches because he was not getting along with the junior and senior high school students at his church school service.

Nevertheless, the pastor told him, "Don't stop," so he continued to serve and stayed in the church and is now here.

As I talked with various young men, I realized that I was not the only one who thought that I was weak, sinful, and unable to get along with others, and that it would be better for me not to be in the church. There were a lot of young men who had similar experiences to mine and more, but were still in church.

They were all porcupines with a blanket over them. For "love covers a multitude of sins." Even though they were weak and sinful, they were still praying for each other, loving each other, looking up to the Lord together, worshipping, and gathering in church.

I wanted to continue attending church too. I want to be covered with a blanket of love, and I also want to cover the blanket of love, and I also want to be a person who covers others with love. I wanted to

spend time in the church together, covering each other with love, and protected by the Lord, I never left the church.

We are all porcupines covered with a blanket. Forgiven and loved, we are friends in faith, living church life together. We are friends who live the church life together and continue to walk the path of faith together.

Above all, Jesus calls us friends (John 15:15) and we are caught up in His love.

Romans 8:39.

No creature, high or deep, or any other creature for that matter, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We are bound together by God’s love for one another and continue to walk together.

Philippians 3:12-14.

’I have not already obtained, nor have I already been made perfect. I am just pursuing to catch it. And Christ Jesus has caught me up to obtain it.

Brethren. I do not think that I have already been caught. Only one thing: forgetting what is behind and stretching out toward what is ahead,

I am running toward the goal, to receive the prize of God’s calling above in Christ Jesus.”

We continue to walk together, we continue to move forward. Because we are not yet perfect. Indeed, we have been given faith, we have been changed. We have been given the fellowship of the church. But we are not perfect.

Just as a bodybuilder works out to perfect his body, we, as Christians, must continue to work out to perfect our faith. It is said, "A man is sharpened by his friends," and we continue to be sharpened and refined by our friends in faith, in the fellowship of the Church, and above all, by Jesus.

“I have not already obtained, nor have I already been perfected. I am just pursuing to catch it.” He says that there is more to come.

Our walk as believers continues. We are to walk with together in that walk of faith. And that journey of faith is not to be lived in our own strength.

We are to put on the armor of God, overcome the temptations of the world, and move toward the goal we are striving for.

Ephesians 6:10-12.

‘I say unto you at the end. Be strengthened in the Lord by the power of his mighty might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of this world of darkness, and against all manner of demons in the heavens.’

We are told that there are spiritual battles that Christians face in our walk. To win these spiritual battles and to continue our walk of faith, we need the power of God, not human power. Temptation and evil against believers living in this world are real.

And the presence of evil is not only a hindrance to God’s work, but also a threat to us.

I John 5:19.

We belong to God, but we know that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”

What is needed to resist such and evil machinations is the armor of God.

Romans 13:12,14.

‘The night is deepening, and the day is drawing near. Let us therefore put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.’

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

We must abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Friend of faith, and put

on the power of Him who rules over all the world.

When faith is given, we can see that this world, the earth, is the scene of intense spiritual warfare. The Christian's battle is not against "flesh and blood," that is, visible people. There are invisible forces of darkness, demons and evil spirits, invisible enemies. And that enemy cannot be overcome by human power, wisdom, will, or effort. But there is no need to fear.

Ephesians 1:19-20.

May you also know how great is the excellent power of God that works in us who believe by the working of His mighty power." This great power God works in Christ

By faith we can rely on the power of God. We do not depend on our own strength, but are strengthened by His mighty power, His great power.

Ephesians 2:5.

For we were dead in transgression, but He made us alive together with Christ. For it is by grace you have been saved."

All men in this world live under the dominion of evil, but out of it we are saved through Jesus Christ. But having been saved, we are still under the temptation of sin, and we must continue to fight. Therefore, we need friends of faith, and together, by the power of God, we continue on our journey of faith. What kind of God's power and God's armor should we seek?

Ephesians 6:14-17.

Put on the girdle of truth around your waist, the breastplate of righteousness on your chest, and the gospel accoutrements of peace on your feet. Above all this, take up the shield of faith. On all this, take up the shield of faith, so that you may put out all the flaming arrows of the wicked one. Put on the helmet of salvation and take the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

We want to continue to walk together, thankful that we have been

given salvation, friends in the faith, and the armor of God.

Let us pray together about what is good and what is bad, and which path we should take, and let us be led by the Lord Jesus so that we will not seek false truths. Even though we may be ruled by fear, suffering, and discouragement, we can win the invisible battle of faith through the armor of God.

John 14:6.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”

This is the path that we must follow in faith. It is the path that the Lord Jesus leads us on. And the goal is the Kingdom of Heaven. For our nationality is in heaven, and in heaven we will be transformed into the same image as the glorified body of Christ.

Philippians 3:20-21

But our nationality is in heaven. From there we look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Christ will change our lowly body into the same image as His glorified body by His power that even makes all things subject to Him.”

Before I was led into the Church, I did not know that our Savior, Jesus Christ, would change our lowly bodies into the same image of His glorified body by His power that can even make all things subject to Himself.

Selfishly, by my own strength, I was seeking the body I thought I wanted and wanted to have. I went to the gym in search of that body. But Jesus, who came to the gym, changed me.

I changed my way of life, thinking that if I had a "glorified body" that Jesus would give me, I would quit being a muscle training fool and seek the "glorified body" that Jesus would give me from now on, rather than a body that would decay.

And instead of living alone, Jesus became my friend and gave me the fellowship of the church and friends to continue walking in faith

together.

Through this fellowship with friends of faith, I was taught that I had been prideful and learned to be humble. I learned that we do not live by our own strength, but by praying together and being strengthened by the armor of God.

Humility means accepting our weaknesses and treating others with love. It is not a life of trying to boast of one's own strength, but a life of humility, loving and helping one another.

I have been taught through my past lives that we are not sharpened by iron, and that we are not trained and refined by iron, but by people, in the Lord, in the fellowship of the church, we are sharpened, trained, refined, and become a glorified body. I began to seek above all else the "glorified body" that would be given to me.

In the past, I used to think that muscle training was compulsory education for men. Now, however, I consider church fellowship to be compulsory education. It is said that where two or three are gathered together, Jesus is there (Matthew 18:20). With friends of faith gathered together, I want to continue to be sharpened by Jesus and aim to have a "glorified body."

With Jesus as our trainer, coach, and friend, let us work together in friendly competition, moving forward step by step toward our goal.

Proverbs 27:17.

'Iron is sharpened by iron, and a man is sharpened by his friend.'