

July 28, 2024
Tsuchiura Megumi Church Worship Service
“It is more blessed to give than to receive”
Acts 20:31-35

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Introduction

Tsuchiura Megumi Church is one of the churches most closely associated with Tokyo Christian University (TCU). I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for inviting me this morning for TCU Day. First of all, please watch this short video. Please pray for TCU as it has undergone fundamental reforms over the past two years to ensure its survival and growth. A new president has been selected and will be announced on August 1. Today will be my last service as acting president.

1, Rest and Work of Christians

To be a Christian, to be forgiven of sins and to be made a child of God, means to become a person like Jesus Christ. Is this an exaggeration? The way we live changes because we die to sin and live to the life of Christ. It means that we recover our identity in the image of God, our relationships with our neighbors are restored, and the way we work is changed. Today, I would like to study the Bible on the theme of “work”.

When you hear the word “work,” you probably think of it as work to earn money. We would call church work as “service” and not “work,” and “volunteer work” for going to Tohoku to support the disaster-stricken areas, and thus we distinguish them from work to earn money. However, there is no such distinction in the Bible. In the Bible, “work” is used in a broad sense.

The word “work” used in **Genesis 2:3, where God “ceased all the work of creation that he was doing,”** is “melakhah”, which is often translated as “work,” and is used for both the work of God and the work of man.

When the Lord Jesus said, “My Father worketh until now: therefore also I work. (John 5:17), the Greek word for “work” is also Elkazomai.” In the passage where **Paul “lived in his house and worked with him” (Acts 18:3)** also, “Elkazomai” is used. **In Philippians 2:30 we read, “because he almost died for the work of Christ.”** The noun form of ergazomai here, “work,” refers to the preaching of the gospel. Thus, in the Bible, the work of God, the work of man, the work of earning a living, helping others, and the proclamation of the gospel are all “works”.

At TCU, we "raise up workers for the Kingdom of God". Church work such as evangelism and pastoral care, work to earn a living, service in the church, and volunteering in the community are all considered important work for the Kingdom of God. Our salvation means the restoration in Jesus Christ of the work of managing the created world.

2. Christ's teaching on the meaning of work

To work, according to biblical teaching, is to give, or to give to one another. However, man and the world, disobedient to God, have changed working to "devouring" (taking).

Paul, who turned to God and became a worker for the gospel, says **Acts 20:33-35: "I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'**

For Paul, working is the same whether it is preaching the gospel or tent-making. His God-given mission was to preach the gospel, so that is his priority, but he does not look down on or dislike tent building. He worked not only for himself but also for those he was with. The work was hard, but when he thought that he could labor and help the weak, he suddenly had a lot of zeal. Paul says that this is because he remembered that the Lord Jesus himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and that he has shown through everything that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This is not a mental ideal, but his realization.

Paul also says this in Ephesians 4:28. **"Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need."**

It may seem extreme that a person who steals will work to give to others, but that is what it means for a person to be saved. If we consider the world that God has given him to manage as his own. This is like stealing from God. It is a perverse and perverse high-mindedness for a created person to try to be like his Maker.

The "greed" to gain is the origin of sin. It is a strange thing that the more we gain, the more we fear that it is not enough and that someone will take it away from us. Therefore, Jesus said, **"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures**

in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matthew 6:19-20).

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” This is a prescription for life that is useful for everyone, not just Christians. But we should learn to “give” from the Triune God Himself.

3. The Triune God is a “giving” God.

God the Father is **the One who “causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Matthew 5:45).** And **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)**

Christ the Son gave Himself freely, even His life. Through this, man understood what “love” is.

Furthermore, God the Holy Spirit, like a person accustomed to remaining in the background, makes Himself nothing, and gives us Jesus, the only begotten Son of God the Father.

God is thoroughly a “giving God. Paul says.

Verses 31-32: “So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” This is the “Kingdom of God” way of life. We came out of our mother’s womb naked. We will return naked to Him. Let us not live our lives trying to gain, gain, and not to give up anything, which would increase our worries, but, rather, let us rejoice in laying up treasures in heaven with peace of mind. There is a big difference between doing the same work while complaining and doing it with gratitude, offering, and giving glory back to God.

The world population I learned in elementary school was 4.6 billion, but now there are 8.1 billion people living in this world. Disparity is a major issue: according to the NGO Oxfam, half of the world’s wealth is owned by the top 2,000 people. According to a report this year, more than half of the world’s population has now become poor, while the world’s top five richest people have doubled their wealth. The profits of the year 2021-2022 of the largest global corporations are said to be 89% higher than the 2017-2020 year average. God’s will is a world where all people help each other by giving a tenth. The world must learn from the Lord Jesus how the Kingdom of God works, “It is more blessed to give than to

receive.” This is why we pray, ”As Thy will be done in heaven, so let it be done on earth.”

Conclusion

There is a tendency to think that a good job is to earn as much money as possible while doing as little work as possible, but this is not true. The blessed way to work is to work hard, do the right work, and give to those in need.

Giving is not limited to money or goods. Listening to others, forgiving first, praying for others, greeting others willingly, and so on. There are ways to live in “giving rather than being given” everywhere.

The Bible does not say that we should not get. The Lord says. **”Test me - says the Lord of hosts - whether I will open the windows of heaven for you and pour overflowing blessings upon you”** (Malachi 3:10). And we pray. “Give us this day our daily bread.” We want to go with the faith “give us much so that we can give much.”

Psalms 112:9 says, ” They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor, their righteousness endures forever.” Paul quotes this verse in **II Corinthians 9:6**, where he exhorts, **”Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”**

I pray that everyone at Tsuchiura Megumi Church will sow abundantly and reap abundantly, and will sow more and more abundantly and reap more and more abundantly.