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## 'Keep the peace.'

II Corinthians 13:11

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Good morning, everyone. This year, we have celebrated the day of worship to commemorate the defeat of Japan. It has been about 79 years since August 15, 1945, when Japan unconditionally surrendered and World War II ended. We call this day not "the end of the war" but "the defeat of the war," and we offer worship services to God in commemoration of the defeat.

However, the world still calls it "the day of the end of the war. Masamori Sase, a professor emeritus at the National Defense Academy of Japan, said, "For me, a fifth grader in the National School at the time, it was unmistakably a lost war. He said, "Defeat" meant humiliation. The "end of the war," however, was not a "defeat," as it was a "defeat" by a third party. However, "the end of the war" is third-party and painless.

In Germany, another defeated country in World War II, there is a word "Kriegsende" that refers to the end of the war, and although the word "Niederlage" can be translated as "defeat," the German translation of "end of war" is not available. In Germany, on the other hand, "defeat" is regarded as "liberation" and "joy", while in Japan it is regarded as "sorrow". So it is.

Even now, there are ongoing wars between nations: Ukraine and Russia, Israel and Gaza. Not only that, there are conflicts. We still have the heavy task of "peace," a task that we have yet to overcome. Peace" is a very important element for Christianity and Christians. The Bible says that "peace" is not something optional, something that is nice to have, but something essential. And Jesus Christ, who is called the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the

Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, came to us, enemies of God, in a world where our relationship with God was broken and filled with war, violence, and sin, and gave us peace with God through the cross and resurrection.

Not only that, he has sent us the Helper, the Holy Spirit, who in turn has entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation, the word, following Jesus. Today, let us once again confirm from the Bible what we are to do.

Let us read today's Bible verses together. II Corinthians 13:11

0The end of the letter

At the end of Paul's letter, he recommends five things. At the end of Paul's letter, he recommends five things: "Rejoice," "Be perfect," "Receive comfort," "Be of one mind," and "Keep the peace. Before the keeping of peace, there is "receive comfort," which can be translated as "encourage one another," and "be of one mind," which cannot be done alone. Without this, we build walls to protect ourselves and create our own peace, which then clashes with the peace of the other side, resulting in conflict and war. The question is whether we are seeking not our own peace but the peace of Christ.

Jesus also said to the crowd in the Sermon on the Mount, and to his disciples who were nearby, "Blessed are the peacemakers. He said "make" peace, not "keep" peace. The word "make" is a positive, action-oriented word. We are told that peace is not something we wait for to come, but something we create, and that our mission is to create peace. Where there is no peace, he says, bring the peace of Christ. And Jesus tells us that you can do it.

So how can we be peacemakers, not peacebreakers? Just as today's passage about encouraging each other and being of one mind before "keeping the peace", Jesus also said six things about the heart before "making peace".

(1) Blessed are the poor in spirit. Are you aware of your own poverty of heart?

(2) Blessed are those who grieve. Are you aware of how you and the world are in a sorrowful state before God?

(3) Blessed are the meek. Are they not rather self-centered, justifying themselves, defending themselves, and hardened in their hearts?

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Especially, can you see how you are not righteous before God, and can you see yourself as you really are?

(5) Blessed are those who are compassionate. Do you feel sorry for others instead of feeling sorry for yourself?

(6) Blessed are the pure in heart. Is it a God-centered heart that is full of God, not a heart full of self?

Jesus taught us that we have six problems of the heart before we can create peace. There are many reasons why wars and conflicts do not disappear from this world, but at the root of it all, the state of our hearts is deeply involved. In order for us to create peace, we must first face our own hearts, realize the poverty and helplessness of our hearts, grieve, and come before Jesus who is the only one who can restore and resolve our heart condition.

And in today's passage, we are told first to "rejoice. This means that we Christians are not to rejoice when something happens that makes us happy. We will not be able to rejoice all the time, but we will grumble, get angry, and speak ill of others, and we will be the ones who break peace not only with God but also with others. Instead, we rejoice because of all the good things God has done for us. We rejoice in the fact that God is with me, that I am saved, that I have been given complete forgiveness through the cross of Jesus, that I am alive today as a child of God, and that there is a Lord who can use us like this. The words of Psalm 103:2. This word is behind this "Rejoice.

Next, "Be perfect. This is also Paul's prayer in verse 9. We may immediately think that this is impossible. And we might skip this part. But Paul is earnestly telling the church in Corinth that such a thing may be impossible in Paul's eyes. What the Bible means by perfection is not to be totally fail-proof or robotic, but to have such a soft heart that even if you sin, you don't try to hide it, but turn to God immediately. And not by our own strength, but by Christ in Ephesians 4, to be perfect "according to the seed" so that the body of Christ and the church may be built up in love.

Receive comfort," which can also be translated "encourage one another. This cannot be done alone. Jesus taught us to love one another. Encouraging one another is the embodiment of loving one another. After Jesus told Peter that he was going to betray Him, He said, "Therefore, do not be afraid, for I am with you always. When we need comfort, the Lord provides it. When we receive that comfort and get back on our feet, it is not the end of the story, but now we are to encourage those who need comfort with the comfort of Christ.

Be of one mind. The people who gather in a church are different in many ways. Different ages, different genders, different financial situations. They have different financial situations, different challenges and problems. We are all in different positions. So, how can we unite our thoughts? It is through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, in His name. And by making His thoughts our thoughts. We cannot be one if we continue to live by our own thoughts, each with his own feelings. But if we make God's thoughts our thoughts, we can unite our thoughts with one another in the Lord.

We had a TEENS camp from July 26th for two nights and three days. And middle and high school students and teachers from Onsarang Church in Korea joined us for this camp. It was the first time in a long time after Corona that middle and high school students from Japan and Korea were in fellowship. The Onsarang church members came to Japan on the 25th. I went with them to Narita Airport to pick them up. When we first met, we were awkward because of

our young relationship, and the first day of the children's camp was awkward, but gradually our relationship deepened as we spent time together, and I experienced with the junior high and high school students and teachers that our thoughts were united as one. We were able to praise and worship the same God together and commune with each other in the Lord. And everywhere I saw them loving and encouraging each other with the Lord's great love for each other, transcending language, culture, and nationality. The peace of Christ was spreading there. When you are connected to Jesus, He will give you everything you need.

Keep the peace. This is the mission given to us, to the church, to us. Keep peace in the Lord. Create it. The beginning of that walk is when we truly confess that God is our Father and that we are His children in grace.

The peace that Jesus is talking about is different from the peace of this world in which we live. What is the peace of this world? It is a state in which society is not disturbed by war or violence, a state in which the world is tranquil. But is this the peace that Jesus is talking about? After World War II, Japan signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty. There is no visible war with the U.S. or any other country. But is Japan at peace? If Japan were at peace, there would be no Self Defense Forces in Japan and there would be no military service in Korea. These are precarious peace.

What about the family? Even if there is no conflict in the family, what if each family member is living a life of disconnectedness and is only concerned with his or her own interests? Can we call that family peaceful because there is no conflict?

The peace of this world in which we live is only a nominal peace, maintained by conditions, laws, and other powerful things. But I believe this is the limit of the peace that human beings can create without God. Peace without God will

collapse as soon as someone with power changes the conditions or laws. Peace without God is a peace that can be maintained in form only if we build walls between countries, between societies, between people, and even between families, and only if we can overcome these walls. Peace without God has no heart, no love, and no relationships. It is a peace maintained by force, weapons, laws, and so on. But peace that comes from God is different.

In Japanese, peace and tranquility are two different words, but if you look at the biblical Hebrew, the word shalom has the meaning of peace and tranquility in one word. The peace that Jesus speaks of is not only in form, but also in heart. Even if it looks like peace, it cannot be called peace if there is anger, hatred, or discontent in the heart.

Looking at Ephesians 2:11, the apostle Paul describes God's peace as follows. Here he describes the strife and division that is taking place in the Ephesian church. There was strife, division, and broken peace between the circumcised and the uncircumcised. Paul is teaching the church, which was in a state of instability, in this way. In Ephesians 2:13-18, he explains it this way. God and we were originally enemies. But God sent Jesus, and God became our Father and we became His children. But I was not the only one who was made a child of God. Through the one Spirit, others were also able to approach God the Father and were made children of God, and we all have a relationship that we can call God's family, brothers and sisters.

God's peace is not made through laws, but through relationships centered on God, the family of God. The Apostles' Creed also says We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. The subject here is "We. But next, "We believe in his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Here the subject is "We. Our confession of faith is that we believe that God is my Father, but we also believe that He is the Father of us all, not just me.

No matter how much we humans try to create and maintain peace in our homes,

workplaces, societies, and nations with laws, power, and walls, that peace will never be complete. In order for the peace that Jesus spoke of to be complete, I must first believe that God is my Father, and when I believe that He is Father not only to my Father, but also to others, those we have difficulty with, those we dislike, and those we consider enemies, we will remember that we are brothers and sisters with one another and be transformed into people who love one another.

The world tries to make peace through definitions, laws, and rules, but not God. When we look at Matthew 5:38-48, God always wraps them in "love". As God's children, we are invited to walk in this peacemaking walk today and in the future. The key point of the peace that God says is "love".

Paul also says, "Love is the key to peace. Colossians 3:12-17 The peace Jesus speaks of calls us to positive action, which is a fellowship of love. Thus, he says that blessed are those who love one another, pray for each other's blessings, cooperate with each other, and make peace by helping each other's weaknesses, and that such people are called children of God.

What about our families and Megumi Church? Are we making the peace that Jesus said? Looking back at my mother and I, if we cannot create this peace and love our families within the family, the smallest social unit in the world, how can we love our spiritual families in the church, in Tsuchiura, Tsukuba, and in Japan?

First of all, I would like to think about how I can become a peacemaker as Jesus said in my own home this week and follow his words. Peace does not come naturally, nor does it end once it is created. Peace is something that is created with awareness. To be aware of this, it is essential to have the awareness that I am a child of God and that person is also a child of God.

The enemy of peace is sin. Colossians 1:20 We were first and foremost an enemy to God, breaking our relationship with God and separating ourselves from Him. We were peace breakers who broke peace with God. But God made peace with us once again through Jesus. He broke down the big wall we had built before Him. And He made us His children. As John 1:12 and Galatians 3:20 say.

And He gives us the example of peace through Jesus, II Corinthians 5:19, entrusting us with the word of reconciliation, Ephesians 6:15, and equipping our feet with the gospel of peace. And Isaiah 26:12 Let us not be afraid, nor give up, but let us make peace through Christ, for the Lord of peace has prepared peace for us. For the God of love and peace is with you.” Because the God of peace is with us, we will be at peace. Let us go out with this Lord to every place where there is strife and where there is need for the peace of Christ, to the breaking point.

Prayer.

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Beloved Heavenly Father, thank you for today's Word. God you invite us today through Jesus to walk in the way he walked. Be peacemakers and peacemakers. But not in distant places, but first, I was told to be a peacemaker in the home with my family that you have given to me. God, I desire to follow this command of yours. God help us. When we feel discontent, anger, and frustration welling up in our hearts, we remember that our mission as Christians is to create God-centered peace through the gospel, our identity, and that we are children of God, and we remember that the words that come out of our mouths should be words of praise and gratitude to you, encouragement to our neighbors, words of love, words of praise, words of gratitude to you, words of encouragement to our neighbors, words of love, words of praise to our neighbors, and words of love. Please protect and guide us, Holy Spirit, so that we can change our words into words of praise, thanksgiving, encouragement to our neighbors, and words of love. We ask that You will bless our homes and our future steps, that when we intercede and pray, You will do Your work, that Your healing and restoration will be given to those who suffer from illness, that salvation will occur, and that You will use us as good conduits as You have blessed us.



We pray in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.