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M250810 Commemoration of the Defeat

“The Table of Reconciliation”

Acts 9:1–19

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○ **Introduction**

Good morning, everyone. This week, August 15, is the anniversary of the defeat in the war. For more than 100 years prior, acts of aggression toward Korea had been repeated, but on this day 80 years ago, Japan lost the Second World War and laid down its weapons. However, even though the war ended, the war within people's hearts did not end immediately, nor did peace come right away.

In the nations Japan fought against—especially on the Korean Peninsula, which had once been ruled as a colony—deep pain, sorrow, and hatred remain. Among the people of South and North Korea are those who had family taken away, their language and names taken away, and even their faith restricted. And within Japan itself, the scars of war were deeply engraved.

We do not mark this day merely as “the day the war ended,” but as a day to remember a sad history, and at the same time, as “a day to choose reconciliation in the Lord,” a day to once again ask before God how we ought to live now as Christians.

Then, how is true reconciliation possible?
Will it come naturally if enough time passes? By forgetting?
Or by one side enduring everything?

Today's Scripture shows the answer through the story of two people who had been in deep enmity, sitting together at the same table. Let us confirm together from the Word what we are to do.

Now, let us read today's Scripture passage verse by verse. New Testament, Acts 9:1–19.

○ **Saul and Ananias**

This passage is very famous for the conversion of Saul. The Saul who appears here was a zealous Jew, of the Pharisees—a man of a fierce Judaistic mindset that said, “Cut off anyone who cannot keep the Law.”

He regarded Christians as heretics, believed that arresting and imprisoning them was justice, and was an “enemy” who intensely oppressed and persecuted Christians. His sense of righteousness destroyed the church and even killed people. For Christians, Saul must have been an object of fear. On his way to Damascus, burning with the desire to persecute and to threaten to kill the Lord's disciples, he was suddenly struck by a light from heaven and fell to the ground. There he heard a

voice: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” The Lord Jesus received the persecution of His disciples as persecution of Himself. The One Saul was persecuting was, in fact, Christ Himself.

At that moment, the Lord Jesus again confronted him with the fact that he had been killing innocent people and persecuting the Lord Himself. Overwhelmed by the depth of his own sin, Saul lost his sight, and, as verse 9 says, spent three days without eating or drinking. During that time, as verse 11 shows, he was “praying.” We can imagine it was a prayer of repentance.

The one who was called to receive and care for such a Saul was a disciple named Ananias. To Ananias, Saul was a terrifying figure—he must have been deeply afraid, for he had heard from many about the terrible things Saul had done. But the Lord said, in verse 15, “I have chosen Saul.”

Though afraid, Ananias obeyed the Lord Jesus, went to Saul, and called out to him, “Brother Saul”—not “enemy,” but “brother.” And he told him that Jesus had sent him so that he might regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit, placing his hands on him.

In that moment, Saul realized that the Jesus Christ he had been persecuting had not judged him, though he was His enemy, but had forgiven him and chosen him to work for Christ. Something like scales fell from his eyes, and he was able to see. He was baptized, ate, and regained his strength.

I believe this meal was the Lord’s Supper, remembering Christ. This table became the place where enemies became brothers and sisters, fellow workers, and members of God’s household. It became the first step in Saul’s new walk as a witness for Christ.

○ **Korea and Japan**

This story overlaps with the history between Japan and Korea. For a long time, even sharing the same faith, Japan and Korea were separated by “the wall of history.” To be honest, exchanges between churches were not easy. I have heard that at Daebang Church, especially among older members, many opposed Koinonia.

Yet, just as the Lord Jesus reconciled Saul and Ananias, He is the One who unites people across the barriers of nation and history.

Japan also did things to Korea that cannot be summed up in the word “terrible.” The “seven thefts”—the theft of the king, sovereignty, land, national language, names, people, and life—the assassination of the empress, 36 years of colonial rule, the merciless killing of many who resisted, especially persecution of God’s church, forcing shrine worship, persecution, and the killing of many pastors and believers. And during the Pacific War, more than one million people were said to have been forcibly taken—made into laborers, soldiers, and comfort women. As a result of Japan’s aggression, the Korean Peninsula was divided into north and south. To Korea, Japan was also an object of fear, an “enemy.”

However, through the sincere apologies to Koreans shown by Pastor Seino and Elder Takekoshi, the attitude of each member of Megumi Church participating in Koinonia facing history with sincerity and repentance, each member of Daebang Church, like Ananias, extended the hand of forgiveness in the Lord, so that we could sit together at the Lord's table of reconciliation and share a meal. And this year, middle and high school students from both churches were added to that fellowship at the table of reconciliation.

As was in Mr. Matsuura's testimony about Koinonia, those of us who have been included in this wonderful fellowship that crosses borders and nationalities have a responsibility to fulfill as Christians. That is, to learn from God the meaning of past history, to examine how we live now and how we will live in the future, and to spread the Lord's table of reconciliation through us to Japan, Korea, and the world.

○ **Reconciliation Still Happens — Resumption of Koinonia after COVID**

In this summer's Japan–Korea middle and high school Koinonia, I saw the spread of that small “table of reconciliation.” Koinonia had long been a fellowship between Japan and Korea, but because of COVID that fellowship was cut off, and this year, after nine years, it was able to resume.

With the theme “Let us eat the Word,” we heard the Word together during camp, praised together, had fellowship, and ate at the same tables. Because there had been a gap, at first we were very awkward with each other, and even when sitting at the same table, we sat separated by church. I remember feeling very anxious, watching as we were a bit reserved with each other, our conversations halting, and wondering whether we could become friends.

But as they played together, praised together, worshiped together, made curry together, and washed one another's feet in the foot-washing service, in the end, there was the sight of the children holding hands, becoming one, and praising God together.

The sight of young people from nations that were enemies 80 years ago, being made “brothers” and “sisters” in the name of Christ, laughing together, offering worship together, and sharing meals and lodging together, was truly a miracle of God's reconciliation. I believe all the teachers present felt, “The Lord is here.”

The gap created by war and history cannot easily be filled by human power. But when we look up to the same Lord and sit at the same table, God Himself fills that gap.

In an article by Pastor Seino about Koinonia, published in 2010 in the Korean newspaper *JoongAng Sunday*, he wrote as follows: “At that time, anti-Japanese sentiment was swirling over the Dokdo/Takeshima issue, and the atmosphere in Korea was heated. I visited Daebang Church with

about 20 believers. There was a welcome reception in the church dining hall, and each person was freely chatting. There was an outside pastor present, and after a while, he said with deep feeling, 'In all my life, I have never seen so many Japanese and Koreans talking so peacefully together like this. This is a miracle.'

This miracle is still being worked by the Lord among us today.

○ **Conditions for Reconciliation**

The reconciliation between Saul and Ananias, and the reunion of the Japanese and Korean middle and high school students—

there are three common points in these:

1. **Responding to God's call**

Reconciliation cannot be decided only by our own feelings or circumstances. When the Lord says, "Go," the first step is to obey that voice. In the parable of the great banquet in Luke 14, God invites all people to His table. But not everyone responds to that invitation. Whether to respond or not depends on us.

2. **Sharing together**

In Acts 2, it says that the people of the early church "broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." The table is not merely a place for eating; it is a place to open our hearts and rebuild relationships. Beyond nationality, status, and gender, it is a place where we are made one in Christ, where Christ's life and faith are shared, and through this fellowship at the table, reconciliation with God and with one another spread.

3. **Living in love**

In John 13, at the last supper with His disciples, Jesus washed the disciples' feet and commanded, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

4.

At that table was Judas Iscariot, who was seeking an opportunity to betray Jesus to the chief priests for thirty silver coins. There was Peter, who said, "I will lay down my life for You," but would deny Him three times. There was Thomas, who bluntly said, "Lord, we don't know where You are going, so how can we know the way?" There was Philip, who did not face Jesus' words, but said, "Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us."

Betrayal, fear, misunderstanding, distrust... The lonely Jesus was surrounded by disciples who would betray Him, abandon Him, or try to make Him do their will. Yet it says that Jesus loved them to the end. "**Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins**" (1 Peter 4:8). Love is a power that transcends positions and past events, and it is indispensable for reconciliation.

And there is the courage to overcome fear and call the other “brother” or “sister.” When Ananias addressed Saul in this way, the door of reconciliation was opened, and this table became the table of reconciliation.

○ **Our Task**

In this worship service commemorating the defeat, I would like us not only to remember the past but to think toward the future, “What kind of table of reconciliation will we spread?”

Grudges within families, conflicts at work or in the community, distrust between nations—Christ calls us beyond all these.

There may be people around us who are still not sitting at the same table: people we avoid, people we cannot forgive, people with whom relationships have been broken. The Lord invites even those people and seeks to have them sit at the same table with you.

The anniversary of the defeat is not merely a day to look back at the past; **it is a day to choose reconciliation.**

The Lord still says today, “Go. He is My chosen instrument.”

Reconciliation begins when we respond to God’s invitation and take the first step.

○ **Conclusion**

Eighty years ago, Korea and Japan were enemies.

But the table of Christ transcends national borders and sad histories.

Because Christ, at the cost of His life, has broken down the dividing wall of hostility between God and us, and between one another (Ephesians 2:14–19).

The Lord, just as He changed Saul, can change our hearts, our relationships, and the relationship between Japan and Korea. And that beginning is to sit at the table of Christ.

The Lord invites us to the “table of reconciliation” that is Koinonia.

The sight of the Japanese and Korean middle and high school students laughing together this time is truly a sign of it.

This table begins with worship and will spread from each one of us to our homes, to our communities, and even between nations.

Therefore, as we go out from here today, let us also make this resolve: “We will spread the table of reconciliation of Christ.”

Let us pray.