

## **“The House of Hospitality”**

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### **Gospel of Mark 1:29–31**

**“As soon as they left the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever, and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. Jesus came near to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.”**

Today is the worship service to commemorate the 39th anniversary of the dedication of this church building. In the place of Kamitakatsu, with Jesus Christ the Savior as the foundation, by the faith of many believers, for 39 years Tsuchiura Megumi Church has continued to be built up.

By the grace of the Lord God and by the prayers of the predecessors in faith, the sanctuary was built, and with thanksgiving for the Lord’s grace, worship has been continually offered. In this sanctuary where we gather, the grace of God and the prayers and praises that have been continually offered until now are overflowing.

And also, Tsuchiura Megumi Church is not only offering worship to the Lord God, but it is overflowing with rich fellowship. There are various worship gatherings: parent-and-child class, kindergarten, elementary, teens, and open worship, and many people from little children to the elderly gather together. There is fellowship in each class, and at lunch fellowship over delicious “Megumi Udon,” and in the afternoon gatherings of servants, gatherings of each generation, during weekdays home gatherings, the *Kiraku-Kiraku Kai*, youth gatherings, and recently even a father’s network has begun.

And there are also four ministries: Mana Kindergarten, *Kiraku-Kiraku Service*, *Mori-no-Gakuen*, and *Karashidane*. Many staff, children, and users gather at Tsuchiura Megumi Church.

There is rich fellowship of the great family of God. One can say Tsuchiura Megumi Church is a big house where a large family lives together.

From little children to the elderly live together, and even a columbarium is included in this great house.

What kind of house should this great house be? What kind of house do we think, “I wish it would be like this”? Above all, what kind of house does the Lord God desire our house to be?

When we say “someone’s house,” sometimes it means the building itself, and sometimes it refers to the family who live in it.

We can say, “So-and-so’s house was recently newly built,” meaning the building, and we can say, “So-and-so’s house is always lively,” meaning the state of the family.

Both are important. The building itself also must be cleaned, maintained, and arranged, so that the family living there can live healthily and comfortably. Also, to welcome guests, to play in the house, or to work in it, it is necessary to keep the building in order.

And also, it is important that the family living there live joyfully together. If there is a small child, he or she must be raised. If someone is tired from work, he or she must be able to rest. If someone is physically disabled, the environment must be arranged and help given. Since everyone is important family, no one should feel, though being in their own house, uneasy or unable to feel safe.

As we live in a great house as a large family, while cherishing the building given by God, managing it, arranging it for the sake of the family, we, the family, helping one another, joyfully worshiping the Lord together, living as a community of faith—let us think of such a way of living together.

First, we are not all blood-related family. We are the family of God in the Lord, joined together by Jesus. Jesus chose each one of us and led us to be those who live with Him.

The scene where Jesus calls each one is written in Mark chapter 1. Jesus met Simon Peter and Andrew by the Sea of Galilee.

**Mark 1:16–18**

**“As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, Simon’s brother, casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed Him.”**

Jesus said, “Follow me,” to fishermen who were casting nets in the Sea of Galilee. There was the invitation from Jesus, and then Simon and his brother Andrew respond. Hearing the voice of Jesus and responding—that is to become a disciple of Jesus, and that is to become the family of God.

In that way, each one of us also has heard the voice of Jesus, has responded to His invitation, and so we are gathered in the church.

And in the family of God there are roles. In the families of this world also, each has roles—as father, as mother, as child, as brother, as sister—and also there are divisions of roles in the family.

Jesus said to Simon and his brother Andrew,

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Not only to become family of God, but also roles are given. A mission is given to live as members of the family of God, and purposes are given to each one to live together. It also means that Jesus has expectations for us.

We are chosen by Jesus, made members of the family of God, and are expected each in our roles. In that way, Jesus chooses each one, and makes a group of people following Him, a family living together.

Jesus did not gather only distinguished people of this world to make a great group to be active in this world, but He chose people of various diversity—indeed from children to elderly, people given with various gifts—and He makes a family where each one, being different, can live richly, diversely, respecting one another, helping one another, and sharing together the joy of living together.

Jesus first chose fishermen as disciples. I think this also has meaning. He chose people engaged in work closely connected with daily life of people—fishermen. He did not choose those who had great power, those unapproachable, apart from people's daily lives, but He chose fishermen who were deeply connected with ordinary life.

The choice of Jesus is mysterious. Why was I chosen? Why am I here? Do we sometimes wonder? Even if we wonder, surely Jesus has chosen each one of us. And in response to that calling, we are gathered here.

And we live as the family of God, helping one another in daily life. As fishermen gladly share the fish they caught, we gladly share the grace of God with one another. Sharing grace, each one lives vividly and brightly, and we can picture a rich family living together.

By the encounter with Jesus, Simon and Andrew's life was changed. They were led to a new way of living. Whoever meets Jesus, his or her way of life will become new and changed.

To the Jesus who says, "Follow me," we "leave the nets" and follow. Leaving behind the former ordinary life, we were led to the new life to which Jesus guides, the life of the family of God.

Reading the Bible, we see that Jesus was indeed the son of a carpenter, but we understand that He did not come to this world to build great buildings.

Jesus, who called fishermen to be "fishers of men," was a carpenter building the family of God, the church, by human beings.

What Jesus worked hard at was inviting people, leading them, living together, helping one another, and forming a community living by faith together.

And Jesus builds the family of God by the Word. Jesus, who called the disciples, afterwards went to the synagogue and spoke the Word.

**Mark 1:21–22**

**"They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and**

**began to teach. The people were amazed at His teaching, because He taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.”**

The people were amazed at the powerful Word of Jesus. There Jesus healed a man possessed by an evil spirit. The disciples there, and the people, were amazed. They were amazed at the power of Jesus, who did not only speak.

Jesus not only spoke, but by works He healed, encouraged, and strengthened people. The works of Jesus were shown not only in the synagogue, but also in homes, the places of daily life of people.

### **Gospel of Mark 1:29–31**

**“As soon as they went out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying down with a fever, and immediately they told Him about her. And He came near, and having taken her hand, He raised her up. And the fever left her, and she was serving them.”**

Jesus went into the house of Simon and Andrew. The disciples go along after Jesus. It is Simon and Andrew’s own house. Jesus also entered into their own house. Jesus came even into their own house. Surely, they were astonished that Jesus is the One who can be deeply involved in their daily life.

And in this way, in their own house, they come to see the wonderful work of Jesus. That is, the healing of the sickness of the family. While Simon and Andrew were following Jesus, being with Jesus, were they not still worried and concerned about their family member who was sick?

Jesus must have known both the situation of the family and the heart of the disciples who were concerned. Jesus is the One who knows well those who follow after Him. When we follow after Jesus, Jesus knows everything about us. The disciples and the family experience the comfort of Jesus. When we live together with Jesus, comfort overflows, grace is full. In the place of our daily life, the mercy and power of Jesus is revealed.

Jesus is the One who comes into our everyday life. About those who welcomed Jesus into the house, it is written that they “immediately” told Him that Simon’s mother-in-law had a fever. At the same time as Jesus came, immediately there was a family member who sought help from Jesus. We also want to be such a family. If within our family, and within God’s family, there is a family member who is suffering, who feels weakness, who needs help, we want to be a loving family who is concerned for them and immediately seeks help from Jesus.

The mother-in-law who was healed by Jesus served the people. That day was the Sabbath, the day of worship. Many of the people at that time surely lived in such a way that on the Sabbath they kept still as much as possible, doing nothing.

But Jesus Himself not only taught in the synagogue on the Sabbath, but also cast out demons, healed sickness, and worked works of love and life.

And the healed mother-in-law then began to serve the people.

In the relationship that Jesus created, people are changed. Through Jesus as the starting point, people begin to respond to one another, and a rich relationship is formed.

We also want to value such a relationship with Jesus, and such relationships with people. Like the disciples who immediately responded to the call of Jesus. We want to be ones who respond to the voice of Jesus. Like the people who, when Jesus came into the house, immediately told Him about the family, we want to be ones who care for those around us and who help them.

And like the mother-in-law who was healed by Jesus served the people, we also want, with thanksgiving, not only to be helped but to become ones who help, not only to be loved but to become ones who love. Such is the form of God's family led by Jesus.

Jesus changed the lives of people. He changed the way of spending the Sabbath.

There is worship, and there is healing, and works of love are done, and hospitality is practiced.

From worship community to faith-life community. This is also the vision of Tsuchiura Megumi Church. It is also the very work Jesus intended to do. And in fact, through Jesus, a family that helps one another, a family that loves one another, a family that shows hospitality to one another, was created.

Jesus is the One who calls out each individual, gives a new role, makes a family, and beyond human common sense, creates the rich fellowship of God's family.

Are we living only within the common sense of this world? Or are we able to live, led by Jesus, in the new values of God's family?

When we live led by Jesus, the place where we gather becomes a house of hospitality overflowing with the grace of Jesus, overflowing with the love of the Lord, more than any gathering of this world can be compared.

Jesus is not only the One who speaks to the crowds in the synagogue, but also the One who relates to each individual, brings healing, and has power to change one person. By that power of Jesus, we also want to be led and transformed into those who show hospitality.

Though Jesus went out to many places and taught in synagogues, one important place of Jesus' work became the house.

We are not only to hear the word of Jesus in the synagogue, but to welcome Jesus into our houses of God's family, to experience the powerful work of Jesus, to love one another, and to seek that our houses may become houses of hospitality that welcome many people.

In this way, we can share together the joy of living together. The house of the tax collector Matthew was also like that.

#### **Gospel of Mark 2:15**

**“And it came to pass, as He was reclining at the table in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners were also reclining with Jesus and His disciples. For there were many, and they were following Him.”**

To gather together, to follow Jesus together. There is no greater joy. The gathering of us who are assembled by Jesus is a gathering of a house of joy, a gathering of a house of hospitality, a gathering of the family of Jesus. It is a rich gathering of God's family who together give worship, together share grace.

Many times Jesus went into houses.

#### **Gospel of Mark 3:20**

**“And He came home, and again the crowd gathered, so that they could not even eat bread.”**

The people gathered seeking Jesus. And before the people who had gathered in the house, Jesus said:

#### **Gospel of Mark 3:33–35**

**“And answering them, He said, ‘Who is My mother, and My brothers?’**

**And looking around at those who were sitting around Him, He said, ‘Behold, My mother and My brothers.**

**For whoever does the will of God, that one is My brother and sister and mother.’”**

The family of God is not something that exists from the beginning, nor is it something naturally formed, like family bound by blood ties. God's family is a special family led by the word of Jesus. And just as even a family bound by blood needs effort and care to continue as a family, all the more, God's family requires effort to continue as family, being conscious that we are family. Listening to the word, seeking the will of God, it is necessary to continue guarding the fellowship of the family.

Jesus said of those who responded to His call and gathered, that they are His family. “Behold, My mother and My brothers.” (v.34) It is by the faith that confesses Jesus as Lord that we become family.

God’s family is the gathering of those who follow Jesus. It is the gathering of those who live seeking the will of God. It is the gathering of those who together receive and share God’s grace.

“Who is My mother, and My brothers?” Jesus asks. It is an important question from Jesus to us who are God’s family. Are we now truly being God’s family? Are we together seeking the will of God, are we valuing our relationships with one another? We want to keep asking ourselves. And we want to continue being God’s family.

We are the family of grace, who together hear the voice of the Lord God, respond to the call of Jesus, see before our eyes the works of healing of the Lord, share the grace, show hospitality and serve one another. We are the family who dwell in the house of hospitality.

“Who is My mother, and My brothers?” While asking this, Jesus surely rejoiced, saying that the people gathered there are His family. And surely those around were also glad.

In our case too, in the same way, Jesus who dwells at the center of our lives rejoices, saying “You who are here are my family”. And we too, looking at one another’s faces with joy, want to recognize that this person, that person, is our God’s family. And we want to continue being in the relationship of living together as family, helping one another, encouraging one another, showing hospitality to one another.

This is the will of Jesus, and in this way by the power of Jesus our relationships are built up. We want to expect the grace of Jesus.

Tsuchiura Megumi Church is overflowing with rich fellowship. There are various worship services, and many people from little children to the elderly gather. There is rich fellowship. There are also the works of the four ministries. It is the rich fellowship of the great family of God, a big house where a large family lives together.

At the center of our big house is Jesus. And Jesus is guiding us so that our house becomes a house where we serve one another, a house of joy, a house of hospitality.