

"Remember"

Rev. Satoshi Inoue

[Scripture] Jude 1:1–5

1:1 From Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James,

To those who are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ:

1:2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.

1:3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you, appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

1:4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed. These are ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ, and they have long beforehand been marked out for this condemnation.

1:5 Now though you know all things once for all, I want to remind you that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.

[Introduction]

Good morning, everyone. My name is Satoshi Inoue, pastor of Toride Bible Church.

Well, many of you would say, "We already know that," but of course, I believe there are certainly also those for whom this is our first meeting.

I was born and raised in this Tsuchiura Megumi Church, and until just three years ago, I had the privilege of serving as one of the staff members here. Today, I am truly grateful to be invited in this way to the 72nd anniversary commemorative service of the church.

However, there is something I would like to tell you in advance. That is, during these three years, I have certainly grown older. If I say such a thing, I may be scolded by those in the Moses group and the Naomi group, but I myself am fully aware that I have aged.

As evidence of that, there is a very high possibility that your names will not come to me easily. I remember your faces, and yet the names do not come out. As I age, the drawers of memory become harder to open. Therefore, if your name does not come out immediately, I would ask for your forgiveness.

Today, under the title "Remember," I would like to share the Word. As for me as well, telling myself firmly, "Remember their faces and names," I would like to speak the Word. Let me offer a word of prayer.

[Prayer]

God, I truly thank You that we are able once again in this way to worship together with the beloved members of Tsuchiura Megumi Church. This is the 72nd anniversary commemorative service of the church. As we count the many blessings that You have poured out upon Megumi Church, may we be able to praise Your name and offer our thanksgiving together. We pray in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

[Those Who Make the History of the Church]

This year, Tsuchiura Megumi Church celebrates its 72nd anniversary since its founding. At the same time, it is also the memorable year marking the 40th anniversary of the dedication of this building here in Kamitakatsu. I have also heard that a 40th anniversary commemorative booklet is now being prepared. I am very much looking forward to it.

In fact, Toride Bible Church is also celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, and likewise we have begun the preparation of a commemorative booklet. A commemorative booklet is something that records the history of a church. And what is important is that each and every one of you who are here today is making the history of Megumi Church.

The commemorative booklets of Tsuchiura Megumi Church have, through the generations, been given the name "On the Way." The very first *On the Way* was published in 1974 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the church planting.

In that commemorative booklet, in fact, my name appears. Toward the end of the first *On the Way*, a chronology is included. In that chronology, it says: September 7, 1967 — Birth: Satoshi Inoue.

Please do not say, "What, just born?" My name is recorded in the commemorative booklet. That is to say, it means that a person named Satoshi Inoue was counted as one of those who make the history of Tsuchiura Megumi Church.

Not only me. Each and every one of you here is making the history of Megumi Church. Your name is inscribed. There, the history of the church is being made. That is an undeniable fact.

Your name has been written in the weekly bulletin or the monthly report. Your name has appeared in the church calendar or in the service assignment list. There, testimonies of faith are given, service and prayers are offered, and in that way the history of the church is being made.

Each and every one of you is the history of Megumi Church. Therefore, what I would like to say today is the importance of looking back on the past and remembering.

[Remember]

1:5 Though you know all things well, I want you to remember: that Jesus, after saving the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

Today we have opened the Epistle of Jude. In the letters that appear in the New Testament, there exists a reason why each letter was written. The one who wrote this letter was Jude—a person born to Joseph and Mary after Jesus Christ.

It is said that this Jude was probably saved after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and joined the fellowship of the early church.

And it is written that the reason Jude tried to write this letter was because an emergency situation had arisen. He says that a battle of faith had arisen among the readers of this letter. And false teachers had appeared who were leading the saved Christians astray.

False teachers who teach wrong doctrines and confuse the brothers and sisters in the church had slipped in. In order to calm such confusion in the church, it became necessary to write an urgent letter. This is the reason why this letter was written.

In order to protect the faith, in order to fight the battle of faith, what was necessary? It was to remember.

It was not that some new teaching was needed for faith to be strengthened. Neither new knowledge nor new information protects the faith. Jude says it is to remember once again what you already know and what you have already experienced.

What Jude first takes up here is the experience of the Exodus. That the people of God, Israel, were delivered and saved from slavery in Egypt. That Israel took the first step as the people of God. He wants them first to remember that.

In other words, what is necessary and important for us in order to keep the faith and to fight the battle of faith is to remember the beginning.

When was it that you first came to Tsuchiura Megumi Church? When was it that you were led to this church and began your walk of faith?

The beginning of Tsuchiura Megumi Church was 72 years ago, on April 11, 1954. It is recorded that on that day, the first worship service of Tsuchiura Megumi Church was offered. In that year, the Winters missionary family came to Japan, and the first service was held.

Some of you may know such church history, and some of you may not. But what is important is that if that day had not existed, the Megumi Church of today would not exist. And if Megumi Church did not exist, none of you would be here today.

A human life is something that is constantly built upon past events. When did my life begin? Where did it begin? And when did my salvation begin? Where did it begin?

Last month, in the March issue of *Light of the World*, the official magazine of the Alliance denomination, the names of those who had reached 50 years in their life of faith were listed. Of course, in Megumi Church as well, there were many who have had 50 years since coming to faith.

How many years has it been for you since you came to faith, since you were saved? Each one of us has a beginning of faith and a beginning of salvation. To remember that is what is necessary and important for us. First of all, I would like us to deeply keep that in our hearts.

[The Battle to Keep the Faith]

1:3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you, appealing that you contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

In this verse 1:3, as I mentioned earlier, the reason why this letter was written is stated.

It is said that this Epistle of Jude was probably written to Jewish Christians. Jude at first intended to write a letter about salvation for the readers who first read this letter.

It is written, "about the salvation which we share together." When was it that you partook of salvation? As for me, I was able to be baptized in this Megumi Church in the summer of my first year of high school, at the age of 15.

I have spoken about this many years ago, but the reason I was baptized was actually because I was threatened.

"Satoshi, receive baptism together with me."

The threat of my older sister—well, with that one word, my baptism was decided. But when I look back, it was truly something for which I am grateful. Because if my sister had not said that to me, I think I would never have been able to make the decision to be baptized on my own.

It has already been more than 40 years since I was baptized. The salvation given by God is truly wonderful. Having received salvation and being led to dedication, now I have been made one who serves the church as a pastor.

However, it does not mean that nothing happened over these 40 years. Just as the people of Israel continued their severe journey of 40 years in the wilderness, I too have been led along a path with mountains and valleys.

As Jude wrote, there has been a battle for the faith once delivered to the saints. I am sure that all of you also have experienced such battles many times until now.

The 40-year journey in the wilderness that the people of Israel experienced after the Exodus was truly harsh. There was no food, no water to drink. There were fierce battles with enemies, and there were also temptations.

It was a painful journey that one would hesitate even to recall. It was a difficult road that one would never want to pass through again. Yet Moses tells the people not to forget that journey.

[Remember]

Deuteronomy 8:2

You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

Forty years ago, when Megumi Church built a new sanctuary here in Kamitakatsu, I was still a high school student. Before building the sanctuary, Megumi Church was located in a place called Komatsu in Tsuchiura City.

From the time I was born, I was raised in the old sanctuary in Komatsu. It was a time when there was neither a large parking lot like the present Megumi Church, nor a ground where we could freely play.

At that time, after Sunday school ended, there was no place at all for the children to stay. So I often played in the cemetery that was next to the church.

The Komatsu sanctuary was a very small sanctuary. At that time, there were about 120 adults, and even with two worship services, it still became so full that it was cramped.

So the idea arose to build a large new sanctuary, and mainly the church leaders went around visiting various churches. Each time they came back from visiting churches, a report would be posted on a large sheet of paper.

"We went to such-and-such church. It was this kind of sanctuary." Each time such a report was given, I, as a child, would let my dreams grow as to what kind of building the new Megumi Church sanctuary would become.

When the church moved from Komatsu to Kamitakatsu, I was truly surprised. The new sanctuary was built in the middle of rice fields as far as the eye could see. There was a large parking lot, and we could even play tennis there.

"You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years," the Bible says.

There is a path that Megumi Church has walked to reach this point. In the Exodus, springs burst forth in the wilderness, and food called manna was given.

They crossed the divided sea, and the Ten Commandments—the word of God, the Law—were given. The people of Israel grumbled and complained and even turned their backs on God. Yet God led the people as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

The walk of Megumi Church also must not always have been smooth sailing. Even so, God protected the church by His wondrous works, saved people by His Word, and nourished their souls.

While many blessings were given to Megumi Church, there were also painful things. There were also things that tested them. It is written that it was **“to know what was in your heart.”**

Suffering and trials are things we would rather avoid if possible. However, through them, what is in my heart is revealed. God desires to know what is in my heart.

Human beings reveal their true feelings when they are driven into a corner. When we feel it is painful, difficult, and hard, what is in our hearts comes out.

God seeks to know what is in my heart by having us pass through difficult paths, by allowing us to experience painful and hard situations.

Megumi Church has now reached 72 years since its birth, and 40 years since moving to the new sanctuary. The pain that the church has experienced, the suffering that the church has tasted—yet through these, God came to know the church, and the church also was given the opportunity to know God.

[Do Not Forget]

Psalm

103:2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits.

103:3 Who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases;

103:4 Who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;

103:5 Who satisfies your years with good things.

Memory is something very important for us. That is because it has the power to support and help our lives.

For example, it is said that what we experience in childhood remains for a lifetime. The experience of being loved as a child gives value to my existence and gives me the power to live and helps me. Also, the experience of overcoming failures and difficulties gives a person confidence and courage to live.

This applies directly to living with faith. The experience of being loved by God and that memory; the memories shared with the family of God and the experiences we have had; and that we have overcome all kinds of hardships by the grace of God—these all become great strength and help for you.

Today, at the beginning, we have kept in our hearts the importance of remembering. To remember means, in other words, not to forget what is important. From the time we were born until now, how many good things has God done for us?

From the birth of Megumi Church until now, how great things has the Lord done? Therefore, **“forget none of His benefits,”** the Bible repeatedly speaks to us.

We do not forget the good things the Lord has done, nor do we forget the Lord Himself, but we continue to remember.

And just as we do not forget the Lord, the Lord also does not forget us. In the midst of pain and suffering, in the midst of failure and sorrow, we sometimes experience loneliness. There are times when we feel as though we are the only one in the whole world.

Yet the Lord does not forget me. No matter what situation we are in, no matter how much time passes, the Lord remembers me.

I pray that Tsuchiura Megumi Church will continue to walk as the people of God who do not forget the Lord, but remember Him. And I would like you to keep in your hearts that Megumi Church is a church that is always remembered by the Lord.

●Prayer

Psalm 103:2

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits.

God, we give thanks from our hearts for the 72nd anniversary of Tsuchiura Megumi Church and for the 40th anniversary of the mission in Kamitakatsu. Seventy-two years ago, You sent missionaries to this place, sowed the seed of the gospel, and caused the church to be born.

As a parent bird shelters its small chicks, You have protected, nourished, and raised the church under Your wings.

Today, together with each and every person who has built the history of Megumi Church, we partake in the grace of being able to offer this worship.

Please enable Tsuchiura Megumi Church from now on to remember the Lord and to walk strongly as a flock that is remembered by the Lord.

God who saves and nourishes people, our Lord, the Lord of Megumi Church, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

● **Benediction**

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ of Tsuchiura Megumi Church, the love of God who nourishes under the shadow of His wings, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit who leads without a moment of forgetting,

be abundantly and without limit upon each one who rejoices in celebrating the 72nd anniversary of the church, and upon Tsuchiura Megumi Church. Amen.