

Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki's Sermon

7/3/2011

The Wise and the Infant Matthew 11: 25-30

In today's scripture lesson, Jesus contrasted the wise with the infant. Who are the wise? They are high priests and scholars of religious laws of his time. They are masters of religious knowledge but callous toward the pain and suffering of others.

Who is the infant? Here the word "infant" is used symbolically. They are the people whom the wise look down upon as ignorant, illiterate, and unclean. They are people so low in social status that they have no one to lord over.

The crux of Jesus' teaching is this: the gospel of Jesus Christ is for those who refuse to inflict pain and suffering on others.

Then Jesus says, "If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest." Here Jesus is speaking to those who refuse to inflict pain on others. It is to those people that Jesus promises rest.

The rest Jesus promises is spiritual serenity given to those who can confidently say, "I am walking and working with God as best as I can."

Paul was such a person. He declared, "It is a small thing to be judged by human beings. He who judges me is the Lord." 1Cor.4:4

Uchimura Kanzo was one of the first Protestant Christians in Japan. Educated at Amherst College, he became a lecturer at the prestigious First College of Imperial Japan.

On June 9, 1891, all the teachers and students of the college were ordered to come to the auditorium. There they were ordered to go up to the front one by one and make a deep bow to the picture of the emperor Meiji.

A deep bow meant affirmation of the divinity of the emperor. It also meant one's absolute support of the emperor's vision of Japan's superiority over Asian nations.

So what did he do? Under the scrutinizing eyes of the students and the faculty and government officials, Uchimura gave an ordinary bow like the one you and I give to each other in daily life.

That meant he honored the emperor as a human being but refused to acknowledge his divinity. It meant he declined to support the emperor's vision of Japan's domination over Asia.

Uchimura's ultimate loyalty was to Almighty God. His ethical precept was refusal to inflict pain and hardship on other nations.

The entire nation of Japan irrupted in an uproar over this incident. From that time on, the tragic and painful life of Uchimura unfolded.

He was released from his teaching position. The students and teachers reviled him, and Japanese society shunned him throughout his life.

And yet, in this overwhelming situation, Uchimura wrote in his diary. "Despite everything, I am at peace. Where does this strange sense of serenity come from? It comes from the confidence that I am obedient to God rather than to human beings. God's will for me is to worship him truly and refuse to inflict pain on other nations."

What does all this have to do with us members of JAUC? It is this: the purpose of JAUC is the nurture of people of faith who refuse to inflict pain on others. We are to be reminded that the church founded by Jesus Christ is a congregation of worshiping people whose ultimate loyalty is to God and whose ethical precept is refusal to be hurtful to others.

God loves each one of us so much that he entrusts us with this sacred task. That is good news, good news, indeed.

Thanks be to God.