

Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki's Sermon
5/16/10 **"You Are Given Life" Psalm 8**

The 16th century French philosopher named Blaise Pascal wrote that what makes human life truly human is a "sensitive spirit." "A sensitive spirit" is a profound self-awareness that I am not on my own. My life is given to me; I am placed here and now by some power greater than myself.

Pascal says that to be shaken by this realization is one of the essential requirements of true humanity.

The trouble with us in the 21st century is that we often ignore this insight of Pascal. We live as if we are products of nature pure and simple. We live as if presupposing a transcendent power is an illusion or a crude form of superstition.

The Old Testament understanding of human beings is on the side of Pascal. Listen to Psalm 8 which begins with the following adoration. "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

For the Psalmist, the whole universe is God's precious creation. "You have set your glory above the heavens. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"

Human beings are the most precious creation of God, says the Psalmist. "You have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor."

In short, according to the Psalmist, you and I are not accidents of nature. God has placed us on this earth with a clear purpose and loving intention. We are placed here on earth as instruments of Almighty God.

The New Testament brings this Psalmist's affirmation even closer to us. God did not remain in the headquarters in heaven. God came down to us in Jesus Christ. God is in the midst of us, feeling our pain as his own, suffering our despair as his own, saying to us, "Come to me all who are heavy laden. I will give you rest."

No sin is unforgivable, because the love of Christ is absolute and unbounded. No pain is unbearable, because Jesus bears it with us. No misery is absolute, because Jesus takes it upon himself for us. This is the foundation of Christian hope.

Some time ago, from this pulpit I spoke of Mizuno Genzo, a Japanese poet who had to spend his entire life bedridden due to his childhood illness. Here is one of his poems he wrote before he died.

"A high school student came to see me. She held my skinny hands in hers with tears in her eyes. In her I saw Jesus. I heard him say, 'I am with you always.' My soul became clean. I was cleansed. What wonderful love! It's good to be alive."

Jesus is with us, sustaining us, embracing us, and walking with us. So let us live each and every moment affirming with Mizuno Genzo, "What wonderful love! It's good to be alive!"