



# Morning Sermon

by Rev. Shohei Tsuda

## Episode 2

If you develop the heart to listen to prayers and learn,  
you can receive divine blessings.

January 2, 2021

Good morning, everyone. We have been able to welcome January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021(Reiwa 3), today.

I've had the opportunities to give sermon since Etsunensai (End of the Year Service) and Ganjitsusai (New Year's day Service). In my sermon's I often mention the practice of faith. The Founder, Konko Daijin said that the Ohiromae(worship hall) is "The place for people to pray and give thanks, and to practice their faith." As I have continued my faith, I have realized that it was "practice" all along. We must know that this Kami is not a Kami that can save people by praying. Konko Daijin distinguishes between praying and being saved by listening to teachings.

*"This Kami-Sama does not save by your chanting of prayers. Kami saves when you listen to the teachings. Give requests for everything through your heart, then you will receive divine blessings." (Gorikai II Sunami Sanokichi 1 Excerpt)*

People in the past must have been more devout than people today. Everyone was doing their best to be pious, by visiting the local deity, worshipping Buddha, and making pilgrimages to <sup>1</sup>the 88 temples of Shikoku. Many people risked their lives to visit <sup>2</sup>Ise and Kumano. Even though they all tried their best to be pious,

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of praying, people make a pilgrimage to the 88th and last sacred site of Kobo-Daishi Kukai in Shikoku.

<sup>2</sup> Since the Edo period (1603-1868), the Ise Shrine (伊勢神宮) has been a place of worship for Japanese people, and the Kumano Kodo (熊野古道) pilgrimage route has been registered as a World Heritage site.

they couldn't receive blessings. Then they got a chance to visit Konko-Sama's worship hall.

At first, they all wanted to get him to pray for them since he has such high virtue. They expected that Konko-Sama prayed and he would be able to help them with his prayers and supplications. Besides, they thought, it would help if they visited and prayed for themselves as well. However, that's not what Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama wants us to do. Rather, Kami-Sama says that's all wrong. And Kami-Sama doesn't appreciate that.

“This Kami-Sama does not save by your chanting of prayers. This is a Kami-Sama that can save people through listening to teachings.” There's a bit of a misnomer. It doesn't mean you don't have to pray. The attitude that praying is all you need to do is what is mistaken. It points out that there is a problem with the idea that if someone prays for you, or if you pray, then that's all that matters. That's not what it means to have faith in Kami-Sama.

People may say, “Go see Konko-Sama!” and then people go to him and ask him to pray for you, and treat him as if Konko-Sama is a man that just give prayers. Or using him to give prayers in place of you, because of his closer connection with Kami-Sama. But that is not the case. It is you that must pray to Kami-Sama and be saved. And that's not all. Although it is important in its own way, the key is to listen to what the teachings say, understand it, fully absorb it, appreciate the teachings and create a vessel within our hearts—that's when we can be saved. That's the kind of Kami-Sama this is.

Another teaching says, “If you develop the heart to listen to prayers and learn, you can receive divine blessings.” In other words, stop praying. People think “If I just pray, I can get blessings” and they think that’s enough. Instead of praying, if we develop the heart to listen to the teachings and be willing to learn, you will receive blessing. So, that is still a lesson to be learned. After that Konko Daijin said, “If you don’t do what I say, you won’t receive blessings.”

*Konko Sama said, “Listen to prayers and learn, you can receive divine blessings.” He added, “If you don’t listen, you won’t be divine blessings.” (Gorikai I Ichimura Mitsugoro 3-39 Excerpt)*

“If you don’t listen, you won’t receive blessings.” In this phrase, the part that says “If you don’t listen” this is implying that if you never learn from the teachings and do as you please, then you will not be able to receive blessings. I’m not saying this to scare you. It’s the truth. It’s quite easy to understand why your life is stuck in the past and why you can’t receive blessings. It’s just that you don’t have a vessel developed inside you to receive the blessings. So, you have to listen and learn. To learn is to practice. We have to review, practice again and review.

Whether you go to cram school or piano lessons, you will learn. To learn means to practice, review and go through repetition. Learning, regardless of whether it is at cram school or at a piano school, means to imitate and then practice. If you’re not doing that, you’ll do

something totally different from what you were taught. This is called “not listening to others.” Even if I tell you to “do this” or “do that,” you will do something completely different. That means you’re not listening to me at all, right? This means that you have become self-taught. In faith, it’s similar to “just placing your hands together in prayer.” People may request “Can you pray for me?” “Doesn’t Kami-Sama use you for this job? Pray for me. I have no desire to do anything for myself. If you just pray for me, that would be just fine. I’ll pay the prayer fees. So just pray for me.” For the person seeking prayers, they have absolutely no desire to reform their way of life. They must be stubborn. And if that’s the case, there is no way they can receive blessings. That is what Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama says.

This Kami-Sama is not a Kami-Sama that just saves you with prayers. Instead, we have to listen to the teachings and learn and practice what we have learned repeatedly within ourselves, and our family as a training guidebook in order to develop a vessel within our hearts. With a good solid vessel, we will gradually be able to receive more and more blessings, and we will be able to be saved. That’s the kind of Kami-Sama this is. If you don’t do these things, you won’t be blessed. This is not meant to be a threat. All Kami-Sama is trying to teach is that “If you don’t listen to what I say, there will be no way that Kami-Sama can give you blessings.” That is the definition of “If you don’t listen to what I say, there will be no blessings.”

If you stop praying, and instead develop the heart

to listen and be willing to learn, you will receive blessings. That is why the worship hall is a place for people to pray and practice their faith. After all, it is practice.

Although, daily worshipping and listening to teachings every day is fine. And I am sure that the more you listen, the more there will be to learn.

However, going to the worship hall, praying and presenting yourself to Kami-Sama are ways of communicating with Kami-Sama. It is also an opportunity to take a good look at our inner self, our past selfish way of life, and our way of thinking that may not be in line with the principles of Heaven and Earth. We need to assess ourselves carefully and plug up any holes in our vessel.

Just worshipping is not going to bring divine blessings. You have to find any holes in your vessel and make a conscious effort to plug up any leaks, or it will be meaningless.

At the Mediation desk, Sensei (mediator) will listen to your problems, and teach what kind of heart we must hold. We have to make an effort to practice what we have been taught. We have to look deep into our hearts and find the holes, loose ends, and tears so we can repair them. That is when prayers can finally take effect and you will be able to receive divine blessings from within.

If you can pray in this manner, Kami-Sama will receive your true heart through your prayers. Kami-Sama will take your sincerity and use it as materials to create the blessings for you. Kami-Sama cannot grant

blessings without the vessel to receive them. With a vessel you have mended or rebuilt, you can finally begin to receive blessings.

Since each of you drew a Mioshie-kuji (Konko teaching lottery) for the beginning of the year, or have been taught in each session of Toritsugi mediation, you might have a lesson to practice. You don't have to go and find another lesson to focus on. It would be better to practice the same lesson repeatedly. In the process of repeating the lesson, you will get sharper and sharper, and your faith will be polished.

Having your faith polished means to practice what you've been taught till this point, applying them in your daily life and continuing to practice. Which is why worshipping can also be considered a lesson and you should learn to do it well every day.

It can be said that the worship hall is a self-study room open to the public before Kami-Sama. It is important to pray to Kami-Sama, however, that is not the only purpose. It can also serve as a place for deep self-reflection and writing down what your feelings or thoughts are in your faith notebook. Without looking at yourself through doing such things, you won't be able to find where the holes are in yourself. No matter how much your holes are pointed out for you, if you don't realize and accept them for yourself, it can't be helped.

Well, if you think about it, going to worship is the same as seeking mediation through Konko-Sama who is present to pray for you and acts as your mediator. You may believe there is a Konko Sama who is solely

for you. In other words, it is a great thing that there is an Ikigami Konko Daijin Toritsugi mediator at that worship hall. The most grateful thing is that Konko Sama can communicate with us in the form of people.

The Kyoten scripture is really like a stranger's loincloth. It may not necessarily fit you. It would be best to use it as a reference as you will probably learn a lot from them, however, there is no guarantee that it will fit you exactly. ]

The same is true for what I'm talking about now. I'm sure there is truth in the scriptures, so I can share them with you, but there is really no comparison between one person and another. Therefore, all you need is to learn the principles of Heaven and Earth and you need to ask sensei to teach what you have to practice. Keeping this in mind as you continue your practice will become your piety.

Faith is a lesson, so we must practice. Even if you go to cram school, there is no point in just being there if you don't study.

I had been waiting for another chance to enter into a university in the past, so I had been attending prep school. There was a study room. Even if I go to the study room and take out my textbook or notebook, it won't do me any good if I don't study and just stay there for eight hours without doing anything. It would be pointless. I used to get sleepy often and would just put my head down on the desk. But then I'd just wake up from my nap and study again, and it would be good.

If there were no study room, this would also be a problem. We can study anywhere, but especially while



prepping for college entrance exams it is often difficult to study at home. Being able to concentrate in a calm environment and work on our studies in a situation where there are no distractions may come down as rare.

In that sense, Amagasaki city is also a city, and spending our days in such a crowded environment can be unsettling. That's why we visit the church and turn our heart to Kami-Sama in the quiet worship hall. Then we can look into ourselves and compare our mind with the teachings. And we can set, adjust and organize our mind and our life. We can also ask Kami-Sama to calm our spirit. This kind of time and place (this worship hall) that Kami-Sama has blessed and Konko Sama has provided for us is something to be truly grateful for.

We should recognize that the existence of this worship hall is a blessing which should not be taken for granted. The fact that I have been assigned to this worship hall in the presence of Kami-Sama, means that we are able to visit, that we are allowed to visit. We really need to know how grateful we are for that and how blessed we are.

People who do not realize this are fools. I believe that for us to be just a little smarter, we need to learn to be a little more mindful and understanding of what we are being blessed with. I'm not talking about the blessings others have received, but the focus should be on the blessings you have received. If you don't even understand the fact that you are the very person who has been given the blessings, there's nothing we can do about this.

We are allowed to visit, to be listened to, to seek

Mediation and learn in the worship hall. We are allowed to learn Kami-Sama's heart. Furthermore, sensei gets close to you and prays for you. And yet you do a lot of things that are rude and irreverent, yet Kami-Sama keeps forgiving you and continues to listen to you.

Even if you fail repeatedly or may be inadequate, Kami-Sama follows you. How I say that "If you will not listen and learn what Kami-Sama says, you won't receive blessing." There are countless people who won't do the right thing even if they say "yes, I'll listen," and they are still pardoned by Kami-Sama. There is no place like this in the world. It really is an indulgent world we live in.

It is truly a blessing to have been blessed with such an opportunity to be in Kami's compassionate presence. I am truly grateful that the Founder started the worship hall and that the successive generations of Konko Sama have continued it. And in the case of Amagasaki Church, which has continued on for one hundred and twenty-four years without missing a single day, starting with the first generation Reverend Kazuta Tsuda. I am so thankful this worship hall is here.

You can listen to what I am saying every morning, even if you are far away. Even if you can't visit here, you can listen to it from a distance, on the train, while cooking, or while doing something else. Isn't this something to be grateful for?

Since Kami-Sama has provided us with so many things, I hope that we will cherish them, listen to them, listen carefully to what Kami-Sama says and what

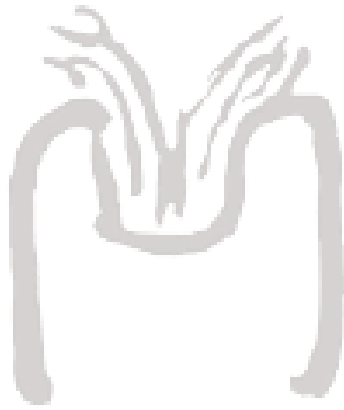
Konko Daijin says, and once we have listened carefully, learn from them, practice them in our daily lives, and apply the teachings. In this way, I wish for everyone to receive blessings.

The only reason I'm talking to you now, and the reason we have this worship hall, is because Kami-Sama wants you all to receive blessings. That's all. For this, Kami-Sama has prepared such a place and such a person just like Konko Daijin.

I want you to make sure that you don't waste these blessings. And also, I want to make sure that you are encouraged to practice faith and receive blessings daily.

Today we have been given a new canvas, so the best thing we can do is to live happily and gratefully. And even if it's difficult, try to focus the light and to see the blessings from Kami-Sama. We have to keep that in mind and not let our heart get cloudy. That's the kind of faith practice I would like to encourage.

Kami-Sama's blessing are glimmering with warm love. Let's embrace it, digest it, and take it into our bodies. I think that's important. Please receive divine blessings. It is great that you have come today.



Morning Sermon  
by Rev. Shohei Tsuda  
Episode 2

January 2, 2021

Published by  
Konkoko Amagasaki Church  
September 13, 2022

3-7-5 Higashinaniwacho,  
Amagasaki-shi, Hyogo-ken 660-0892  
Japan