



Morning Sermon

by Rev. Shohei Tsuda

Episode 6

All food is provided by Tenchi Kane No Kami to sustain our lives.

January 6, 2021

Good morning. We have been able to welcome the 6th of January (Reiwa 3). Since we are here today as a human being to learn from Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama the right way to live, the way to live in line with the ways of Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama, let's learn from one another and continue to live together with Kami-Sama today as we practice faith. On this day, we have received a new sheet of paper, so I would like for everyone to practice faith today.

When times get tough, leaning against Kami-Sama is an important thing to do. There is a way to worship to pray for a situation, and there is a way to worship to develop ones' faith. When you are in trouble, you come to pray. That in itself is an important thing to do. But when one receives their blessing and stop coming to worship, it's really too bad. To understand being truly appreciative of Kami-Sama and to put faith into our daily life is even more important. It is the way to live a happier and robust way. I think it is important to learn this.

Let's put aside the topic of going to worship for the sole purpose of praying for something. I'll focus on the importance of going to worship to develop one's faith after receiving blessings. Going to worship to develop ones' faith is the same as going to school to learn. Like with gaining skills, one must go to practice often so they can learn. Even in going to school. If you go to school every day, you will learn something. There are many people who cannot go to school to learn in this world. However, in Japan, we are very blessed and fortunate to have this opportunity to learn. Everyone gets the opportunity to learn. They can go to school to learn the basics to survive in society.

However, if you think about it, there aren't many places where you go and learn how to live. How do we need to live as a human being in this world? How do we go about living in the midst of Heaven and Earth? We have no clue when our

lives will end. But we can learn from Kami-Sama in this manner and practice faith in your daily life. Then gradually, we will be able to receive divine blessings. The things we can see, the things we cannot see, our heart, our body, money, human relationships, workplace, at home, at school, our physical body and our soul can all receive divine blessings. And not only you, but even your family and even to your distant relatives, 1,000, 10,000 of them, even the Mitama Spirits can all receive divine blessings. That's the kind of spiritual connection we have received. So, I believe our day to day living is very important.

Kami-Sama has been really praying for the Founder. And the Founder speaks to the many followers that came to see him. The teachings of this way of faith are known for being relevant in our day to day living. For example, even for eating meals, there are a lot of teachings regarding this topic. To eat is essential for us humans who have come into this world. As long as we live, we must drink and eat to survive. Without this, we simply cannot sustain our lives. The same is true for all living things. Because all foods are blessings from Tenchi No Kami-Sama, there is a teaching that states to partake food with gratitude and respect.

There is the so-called grace before meal. It is a prayer, or more-so a teaching that came straight from Kami-Sama for us to recite before partaking any foods. It also helps us to focus our thoughts on the blessings of the food. In addition to the grace before meal, there is a grace after meal. It helps us to be mindful of the attitude we should hold after partaking food. There were also teachings that affirm if our heart is in line with Kami-Sama, or if it is in line with the laws of the Universe.

The grace before meal is basically composed with 2 teachings of the Founder. I believe that both of the teachings came from the Shinkun. The first part goes,

“All food is provided by Tenchi Kane No Kami to sustain our lives.” (Gorikai III Shinkun 1-13)

As we go to the supermarket, the vegetable shop, fruit shop, fish shop, meat shop, etc, there are many kinds of food items. Even dogs and cats need to eat, so there is food for them as well. Food is not available only for human life sustenance. Animals need food as well. If this grace before meal is recited before eating, for example a bowl of rice, miso soup and some bread, maybe. Let’s say these food items are laid out on the table in front of you, with a pair of chopsticks. Then the grace before meal is a little prayer you say right before you take your first bite of food.

The word “food” in the grace before meal implies the food in front of you that had been prepared for you, that you are about to partake. The food that is presented in front of you has been provided and made by the blessings of Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama to sustain this one life. The second part of the grace before meal says

“Do not forget the heart to be thankful for whatever foods you may eat or drink.” (Gorikai III Shinkun 2-15)

Again, the grace before meal is made from 2 separate teachings and we recite this as our prayer before we eat. All foods have been provided by Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama. The sun that provides light is a blessing. The rain that falls is a blessing. Humans are all allowed to live in the midst of divine blessings. There is a teaching that goes

“The sun that shines upon us is a divine blessing. The rain that falls is a divine blessing as well. All humans are allowed to live amidst the many blessings. Humans are born amidst divine blessings. Live amidst divine blessings and die into divine blessings.” (Gorikai II Toshimori Shino 1)

It is exactly that. With the sun that gives us light, the rain that falls, and the food that grows—we then eat the food. And all living things eat food. There are animals that eat plants. Then there are animals that eat those animals, and it all becomes the food chain. Without the sun, this would not be possible. And if it didn't rain, nothing would grow. We simply cannot live. Water and air and every are all the same. With the blessings of Heaven and Earth, we have the food in front of us. The supermarket didn't make the food. Food is made possible through the blessings of Heaven and earth and the great Life Force that governs this Universe.

To be alive, means we have to eat life. We eat foods and then we are able to live. That is why it is paramount to not forget the heart to be thankful for whatever we may eat or drink. To be thankful “Arigatai” written in kanji characters “Ari” (Possible) “Gatai” (Difficult). Which basically means, what we have now was difficult to obtain. That is why the Founder teaches us that we really should not forget to be thankful and not take for granted all the foods and drinks that have been provided by Tenchi No Kami-Sama.

If you think about it, humans cannot even create a single grain of rice. You can't make rice yourselves, right? We do not even have the ability to sustain the life of a rice plant. It needs water. It needs sunlight. It needs soil. We cannot make soil, water or sunlight. We can try to replicate these conditions, but humans themselves have been given life. So if you really think about it, food is made possible through the blessings of Heaven and Earth and the workings of Kami-Sama. The ability to prepare foods, the ability to eat the foods is the same. That is why we cannot take these blessings for granted. These are all blessings. Blessings of Heaven and Earth, Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama. Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama implies the body of Kami-Sama. Kami-Sama equals Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama. These blessings we receive from Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama really should not be taken for granted. The Founder has taught us that we must not

forget to be appreciative of these blessings.

There isn't a single person who could live without food. Of course when people are hospitalized and are unable to eat, they still receive nutrition via intravenous route. To partake may not only imply to eat using our mouths. It includes any kind of life prolonging sustenance or nutrition. But in general, we eat daily. 365 days of the year. There isn't a day we are not eating or drinking something.

And because it's something so mundane we do every day, we don't give it much thought and we take this for granted. This is where it becomes important. People may rejoice when they received a miraculous divine blessing of healing and such. But Kami-Sama's deep love and compassion for us comes in the form of these daily mundane blessings that we take for granted.

These blessings are there for us daily. They are prepared for us daily. We have been able to sleep in the comforts of our futon daily. We have been able to use the restroom daily. We have been able to see with our eyes, hear with our ears and move our arms and legs at will. These seemingly ordinary things—things that people don't even find appreciative, things that everybody else is blessed with regardless if they practice faith or not. But these are the very things that are so important.

The Founder stated that it's these seemingly ordinary things are what's important. These blessings are the great love of Kami-Sama. The most basic level in understanding the Konko faith is whether you can identify these blessings are the great love of Kami-Sama.

Of course, it is important to have your pains and itchiness cured. These things become the triggers for one to begin to practice faith. But again, if you really think about the core of the faith—the joint pin of a folding fan—the most important aspect of the faith, is really how much you can comprehend the unconditional, all giving nature of the blessings

from Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama and express your utmost gratitude for these daily blessings you receive. We simply must not forget this.

People end up suffering because the core essence of the faith itself gets forgotten. There are a lot of people who begin practicing faith and receive blessings after facing hardship. And really, there is nothing wrong with that. Yet, people just end it there. They receive their blessing and give a hooray and it ends there. And that's no good. That's called "Onegai Mairi" (Worshipping just for blessings).

In "Shinjin Mairi" (Worshipping to gain faith)—People while living, commit various irreverence towards Kami-Sama, also called "Burei." Burei when written in Kanji characters means "Kansha ga nai" (You have no appreciation). You don't feel the benevolent nature of Kami-Sama, you don't feel the great love of Kami-Sama.

The great love of Kami-Sama doesn't care if you practice faith or not. This great love is generously distributed to all. The sun for example rises and gives us light. This is something we all receive unconditionally. Being able to say thank you for that. It's easy to give thanks for things that have been given specifically to you. People may not feel grateful for things that are given equally to everyone else. But if you think about how important the sun is, you will understand that if the sun stopped existing this instant, we simply would not be able to live. We will all freeze to death.

You are on a one on one relationship with Kami-Sama. And within that relationship, how much are you appreciative of these blessings? Because of these blessings we are allowed to live. This is the great love and compassion of Kami-Sama. Kami-Sama's heart wonders how much you can understand this. And the Founder, Konko-Daijin is the one that has taught us that we need to understand the heart of Kami-Sama. But without realizing this, many people commit irreverence and are disrespectful to Kami. People aren't thankful. There is wastage and there is negligence. In that way, people

accumulate offenses and end up in suffering. Therefore, to practice faith is to switch the irreverence to gratitude. What's important is that gratitude is born.

But to give great thanks for receiving a tremendous divine blessing from a misfortune doesn't necessarily mean that you are a believer. I do believe that it can become a catalyst to initiate into the practice of faith. But if it just ends there, it would only be "Ogami shinjin" or "Okage shinjin" just praying for immediate blessings. That kind of faith just stops right after one receives their blessings. That's like receiving a lump sum of money. Again, it's essential to understanding that everyday blessings are great blessings. And not take them for granted. How deeply are you able to understand this concept of being truly thankful for these daily blessings? If one is able to do that, they will truly be saved and will be able to be happy.

You don't have to look far to see if you are receiving Kami-Sama's blessings. You can begin by looking right in front of you. Look at your clothes. Look at the food before you eat it. When you turn on the faucet, look at the water. You can see that I am wearing glasses right now. When morning comes and I give my glasses a polish before putting them on, I do give my appreciation to them. Without these glasses, it would really make things hard for me. So I say thank you to them. I also give thanks for being able to see with my eyes. Even when I go to use the restroom, I say thank you. I say thank you to the toilet that I am able to use. I say thank you when I brush my teeth, too. I also say that to my toothbrush, the cup and the water I use to brush my teeth. I give thanks to my teeth as well. I say thank you when I put my shoes on, and again when I take them off.

Having shoes to wear is natural, being able to brush our teeth is natural, being able to use the restroom is natural, being able to eat is natural—but really, is it all natural? Aren't you being deceived that all these things we are able to do and possess are "natural"? Of course, there are instances where

one will finally have an appreciation towards these things when they lose the item or ability. But it really is a waste to notice after the fact that it's gone.

We may get ill for a moment where may not be able to eat, sleep or walk. These brief moments of disability are given to us as opportunities to look back at how blessed we were when we were healthy. So the very fact of being able to eat is something we must be truly grateful for and not take this function for granted. You can really see how these hiccups in life become our chance to look back on our blessedness. That is where we have to give thanks. But because we are human, we tend to forget to be thankful when some time passes from these hardships. Humans are foolish in this sense that they so easily forget the blessings they received. But if we should make an effort to give daily thanks.

“The sun that shines upon us is a divine blessing. The rain that falls is a divine blessing as well. All humans are allowed to live amidst the many blessings. Humans are born amidst divine blessings. Live amidst divine blessings and die into divine blessings.” (Gorikai II Toshimori Shino 1)

“Die into divine blessings.” This phrase can be understood either way. It can mean that we die through the blessings of Kami, but it can also imply a certain direction. It can also mean that we literally die by diving into divine blessings. “Being born amidst divine blessings. Being able to live amidst divine blessings. Being able to die into divine blessings.” All of us were born into this world, lived our life and will one-day die into divine blessings. But in order for us to do so, food is essential, bathing is essential, eliminating our wastes is essential, exercising is essential, and so are countless other elements. There are many things that are essential in our daily life, that we fail to recognize as blessings, and instead take them for granted. These blessings are given to us. You are all being deceived that it's all “natural” to have these many

things and abilities.

If a war were to break out, there will be a shortage of food and water. Life itself becomes something that we can't take for granted. Being able to have a goodnight's rest or being able to soak comfortably in your bath tub won't come naturally in these circumstances. It becomes so important to understand that our every day life is chock full of blessings.

The core of the faith is to understand this principle. Without realizing this, people accumulate offenses, which turn into suffering, and misfortunes happen one after another, even onto the next generation.

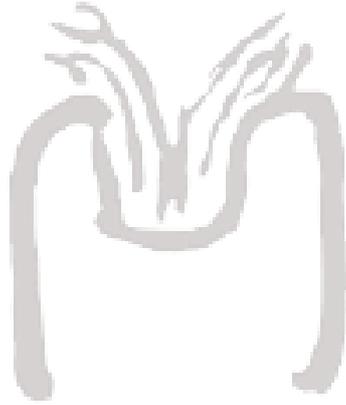
But the opposite can also be said. If you are able to receive the trust and virtue of Heaven and Earth and Kami-Sama and come to a full understanding of the great blessings from the core of our hearts and just can't help but tell others about it—this then becomes true faith practice.

Let's look in front of you. Let's look at our feet. You don't have to look far. What we have in front of us is actually the greatest blessings we can't take for granted. Please realize this. The great love of Kami-Sama is right here in front of us. As our lives will one day end, we will die into divine blessings. Which means we will literally dive right into the blessings. We are born amidst divine blessings, live amidst divine blessings and die into divine blessings. Doesn't this give you peace of mind?

To have a full understanding of this is an important part in the practice of our faith, and that's what we covered today. As you think about what we talked about today, please continue to live your life and continue your practice of faith. As you use the restroom today, eat your meals, and put on your shoes, try to really make an effort to remember that these blessings do not come naturally, but are instead blessings that we need to be grateful for. Being able to sleep in the comfort of your futon—be thankful for that. Having a kotatsu (foot warming table)—be grateful for that. Feel like eating an

orange? How blessed you are. What great weather we have today! How blessed we are. For everything that we are blessed with doesn't come naturally, but are blessings. You are blessed with a family, you can communicate, your eyes can see, your ears can hear, you can eat, these blessings don't come naturally. Again, please realize that we must not take anything for granted. Give thanks in that moment. Don't just come here and put your hands together to give thanks. Whatever you do, wherever you are, face your heart towards Kami-Sama and be truly grateful for everything. Give thanks for all that Kami-Sama does for us and pray for all things. If we can do this, you will find that the blessings will come to you naturally. Having the heart of appreciation is the greatest way to clear away our accumulated offenses.

Let's receive blessings again today. It is great that you have come today.



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