



# Morning Sermon

by Rev. Shohei Tsuda

## Episode 16

A firmly driven stake cannot be pulled out without shaking.

January 16, 2021

Good morning. We welcome the morning of January 16th in the third year of Reiwa.

In the teachings of our founder, there's a saying, "Turn great calamities into small ones." It's like filling a basin with water and releasing it all at once causes a major disaster, but if you release it slowly in small amounts, it becomes a minor trouble. I shared a story about believing in this teaching and how we can turn major difficulties into minor ones, and minor difficulties into nothing. Today, I'd like to continue with that.

Kami-sama turns major difficulties into minor ones. Kami-sama turns great calamities into small ones. At that time, if a huge tsunami-like thing comes and swallows us, it becomes a major disaster. However, if we handle it step by step, dividing it into smaller parts, that's essential. While safeguarding our lives, we should continue our daily lives (within the context of faith). It also means clearing our debts to heaven and earth little by little.

At such times, it often happens that just when we think we've made some progress and endured a difficult period, another tough time emerges. Then, we have to resort to faith again to get through it, and when we finally find some relief, another challenging phase comes. This cycle repeats.

When you think about it, it's similar to the concept of installment payments. Rather than dividing it daily, we can think of it as dividing it once a month, which is like a loan in the secular world. Monthly, we pay off a fixed amount, not the entire sum at once.

By the principles of heaven and earth, even when dealing with matters concerning human lives, great difficulties are divided into smaller parts, and we clear them away. It's incredibly tough at that moment, whether it's physically, mentally, financially, or in relationships. But if we endure through it, we suddenly feel relief. We feel relieved and think, "Oh, that's good," or in some cases, "Maybe it's cured now." But it's a mistaken thought because another payment period

comes, another clearing time comes, and then another difficult situation occurs. We think, "Here we go again," but if we endure through it again, we find relief again. We think, "Ah, I feel better now..." and we believe it might be over soon, but again it's a mistaken thought, and another difficult time comes.

We think, "Again? Again?" Human beings tend to think that way. From my own experience, when I keep saying, "Is it coming? Is it coming?" it keeps coming. So, you have to be prepared for that and think, "If it's going to come again and again, it's fine. Each time, day by day, month by month, I'll live through it. If it gets tough again, for that day, I'll be grateful for each moment of relief and seek help while relying on the divine presence of Kami-sama, the great Kami-sama of the golden light. Let's spend each day together in that way." When you reach that mindset, whether it comes or not becomes less of a significant issue.

Each day becomes everything. With that mindset, things often end sooner than expected. As long as you keep thinking, "Is it coming? Is it coming?" it keeps coming. "I'm fine with it coming anytime, and I'm okay with it coming as many times as needed. I leave it all to Kami. I'll just live each day as it comes." When you truly understand this from the core of your being, it becomes apparent how fast things can change. As you repeat this way of receiving blessings and internalize it, the feeling of "again and again" gradually diminishes.

A girl named Akiyama Kinoe, who was fifteen years old at the time, came to pay her respects to Kyoso-Hiromae (the worship hall of the founder). Her mother's illness was the reason she decided to visit. At that time, her mother had been suffering from a long-term illness. Her mother was forty-five years old, and Kinoe was fifteen. Surely, as a daughter, she must have wished for her mother to be saved by Kami's help. There was an elderly woman from the neighborhood named Shiwaku Kiyō, who used to pay her respects to the founder. With her guidance, fifteen-year-old Akiyama visited the

founder to pray.

The age of fifteen at that time might be equivalent to around fourteen in the current way of counting years. Even if Akiyama was the one who came to talk to the founder, she might still have felt nervous and embarrassed. So, accompanied by the elderly woman Kiyō, she conveyed the following message. Kinōe might have been right next to her. And then, Kiyō delivered the message about Kinōe's mother who had been suffering for a long time."

**It has been a long-term illness, but will it be cured?  
(II Akiyama Kinōe I Excerpt)**

In response, rather than addressing Kiyō, Konko-sama (the founder) turned to Kinōe and asked,

**Do you prefer to be cured or not?  
(From the same Gorikai)**

Kinōe didn't know how to respond and remained silent, looking hesitant. Then, Konko-sama reiterated,

**Wouldn't it be better to wish for a cure? You came here seeking healing, so you should not be thinking whether it will happen or not. From today onwards, believe that your mother will gradually recover. If you steadily improve and your mother's body becomes stronger, even if her age, the illness will be cured. Believe that your mother will get better little by little through your faith.**

**(From the same Gorikai)**

When Kiyō asked, "It has been a long-term illness, but will it be cured?", although it wasn't a direct question from Kinōe, it was probably an honest concern. Before asking for healing, she expressed the worry, "Um, will this be cured?" to Konko-sama. Then, Konko-sama, rather than addressing the

elderly woman Kiyō, turned to Kinōe, who had come to pray at the age of fifteen, and said, "Wouldn't you prefer to be cured?" Konko-sama advised her not to have thoughts like, 'Will my mother be cured? What will happen?' since she had come seeking healing. Konko-sama encouraged her to believe that from that very day, her mother would gradually get better. It wasn't just about getting better right away. It was about gradually getting better. Konko-sama said, "Believe that she will head towards complete recovery," emphasizing the need for her to think that way. "Gradually" is again emphasized here. It's not an immediate process. "Believe that your mother will gradually get better," - this is about having faith. Faith is important here.

It's not just about thinking, "Believe that your mother will gradually get better." Konko-sama said, "Believe that your mother will gradually get better through faith." That's the part about having faith and expressing gratitude. This is crucial. Well, Konko-sama talks a lot about it, but it's not like you'll be saved just by praying or receiving prayers. It's not just about going there, and that's it. It's not that simple. It's not like, "I pray, receive prayers, and then I'm done." No, it's not like that. As you are coming to learn faith, you pray, listen to the teachings, take them to heart, use your own family as your practice field, and direct your heart towards Kami-sama in your daily life. You express gratitude, apologize, and rely on Kami-sama. It's about continuing that life of faith. That's what "have faith" means. And when it was time to leave after the mediation, Kiyō said to Kinōe, "Konko-sama told me (you know) that

**Having faith for your parents is an act of filial piety. If you practice filial piety for your parents and have faith, you will receive blessings.**

**(From the same Gorikai)**

Konko-sama indeed said so. It's uncertain whether Kinōe

fully understood everything, so Kiyo relayed Konko-sama's words in a way that Kinoe could comprehend. The crucial point here is "having faith for one's parents." Faith is essential. Without faith, blessings cannot be received. So, what they must take back with them is the message "Have faith." It's not just about coming to pray and receive blessings; it's about having faith through which blessings can be received. That's what they are telling this girl. Rather than having faith for oneself in times of distress, it's more about wanting one's parents to be saved. Kinoe came to pray because her mother had been suffering from a long-term illness, and she wanted her mother to be saved, to be relieved of her illness. Having faith for the sake of one's parents is an act of filial piety—a noble act. So, by being filial to one's parents and having faith, one can receive blessings. That's what Konko-sama conveyed.

After returning home, Kinoe reflects on her experience. At first, after praying, her mother felt much better. However, after one or two months, the same symptoms returned. She thought, "I thought she had gotten better." It's an honest feeling. Despite thinking that way, Kinoe returned to Konko-sama's hiromae to pray. She had improved so much, but the condition worsened again. So, with those thoughts in mind, she prayed.

Then, Konko-sama said,

**You must be feeling it's tough and difficult to face the recurrence of the illness. However, she is gradually receiving the handling of the burdens, and little by little, they are getting lighter." And indeed, Kinoe's mother gradually improved.**

**(From the same Gorikai)**

Here, Konko-sama reassures Kinoe that although it may seem tough and difficult when the illness recurs, the handling

of the burdens is being gradually taken care of, and it is becoming lighter. This indicates that the process of improvement is ongoing and that she should have faith and trust in the divine guidance and blessings, even when faced with setbacks. It shows the importance of maintaining faith and perseverance in times of challenges to eventually achieve healing and well-being.

It seems that after thinking, "Ah, it's good, I'm glad my mother got better," Kinoe returned to pray after one or two months, only to experience the same symptoms again, leading to feelings of disappointment and uncertainty about whether her mother would be cured. However, upon praying, Konko-sama addressed her thoughts, saying, "You must be feeling it's tough and difficult, right?" Konko-sama then reassured her, "However, she is gradually receiving the handling of her burdens." Again, the emphasis is on "gradually." Konko-sama continued, "Little by little, the burdens are decreasing, and they are becoming lighter." This must have been very reassuring and encouraging to hear. Kinoe said that as Konko-sama had spoken, her mother indeed gradually improved, and she was grateful for it.

However, around six months later, Kinoe's mother was doing laundry. Her mother had probably recovered to the point where she could move around. While doing the laundry, her nose started to bleed suddenly, and it was a considerable amount—about two to three "go" (a traditional Japanese measurement unit for liquid) worth of blood, which is quite substantial. It's equivalent to about one-third or one-fourth of the one-sho (a Japanese measurement equivalent to 1.8 liters) sake bottle that is offered as an offering at the alters. Nosebleeds of that quantity are quite rare and unexpected.

That night, everyone gathered around Kinoe's mother's bedside. It seems they thought the situation was getting critical. It was not an ordinary situation, considering the substantial and uncontrollable nosebleed that lasted for about two to three "go." They must have been shocked. So, everyone

gathered around her mother's bedside.

At that time, Kinoe, being still young, may have dozed off and had a dream.

**I was surprised to see in my dream that Konko-sama came while I was dozing off.**

**(From the same Gorikai)**

In her dream, Kinoe saw Konko-sama visiting her while she was dozing off.

Kinoe was grateful for receiving such a meaningful dream. The next morning, Kiyō, the elderly lady who accompanied Kinoe during her initial visit, acted as a proxy and went to pray on behalf of Kinoe for her mother's condition. Kiyō visited Konko-sama and then returned to inform Kinoe about what was said.

Konko-sama mentioned that

“The recent episode of heavy nosebleed was also a part of Otorisabaki(of Meguri), the handling (or "taking care") of the situation. The illness had been long-standing, and it was something that would gradually get better little by little. Therefore, there was no need to worry.”

And indeed, as documented in the teachings, her mother's condition improved gradually, but it seemed to go through cycles of improvement and deterioration repeatedly. Since it was a long-standing illness with deep roots, it was a formidable and persistent challenge. The root of the illness was strong, which is why it couldn't be cured with just one "Otorisabaki" or "Otoriharai". Due to its prolonged nature, it wouldn't be resolved quickly, but if Kinoe continued to have firm faith, Kami-Sama would gradually take care of it and it would get better. Therefore, there was no need to worry.

The message here is about the importance of steadfast faith and perseverance. Although the illness might not be easily cured due to its long-standing nature, continuous and unwavering faith in Kami would lead to gradual improvement



and resolution over time, and there was reassurance that Kami-Sama was taking care of the situation step by step. This is a reflection of the guiding principles of the faith, emphasizing faith, patience, and trust in the process of healing and blessings from Kami-Sama.

Indeed, it is certain that Kinoe-san had faith. And as a result, she was able to receive blessings. This is recorded in the scriptures. There is a section in the "Jinbutsushi" (※"Jinbutsushi" is a compilation in the "Konkokyo" that covers all the individuals mentioned in the teachings and provides explanations). At that time, in the record related to Akiyama Kinoe-san, it might be similar to the current teachings, but the wording might be slightly different. It is uncertain whether Kinoe-san herself spoke or wrote during the compilation of the scriptures, but in some way, her experiences were included. She may have been an adult or perhaps elderly at that time.

In the record, it is mentioned that she went to visit Konko-sama (the Hiromae, founder of Konkokyo) and saw hanging lanterns (角灯籠) and several food stalls selling items like sugarcane and mandarins. This must have been during the period when she visited Konko-sama's residence.

Through Konko-sama's divine mediation, she received the following "Oshirase", or some information from Kami-sama about her mother's illness.

“Ne no toshi haha negaijoyoju, Konko-Daijin kiki sumi mousu (子の年母願い成就、金光大神聞き済み申す)” (※ The wish for the mother born in Year of the Rat will come true. Konko Daijin listened to and conveyed it to Kami-sama )

Konko-sama continued, "Do you prefer to be cured or not?" She was at a loss for a reply again, as before. Then,

"If you engage in sincere faith and recover from your parent's illness, it will be an act of filial piety towards your

parents and loyalty to those in authority." (Excerpt from "Jin-butsumushi" in Konkokyo Teachings, pages 11-12)

Indeed, the passage mentions both the aspect of being filial to one's parents and loyal to those in authority. Additionally, there may be parts not included in the teachings but recorded elsewhere. It seems that after recovering from the illness, there were relapses where the same symptoms appeared again, and perhaps she felt discouraged when visiting the hiromae at that time.

Later on, she was taught the following:

**A firmly driven stake cannot be pulled out without shaking. Because it is a long-standing illness, it won't improve all at once. You will gradually receive the divine grace. Even if the illness occasionally recurs, don't be troubled. Consider it as a grateful removal and receive the divine grace." Afterward, Tomi (the mother) completely recovered without consulting a doctor or taking any medicine.**

(From the same Gorikai)

"Just like a firmly driven stake cannot be pulled out without shaking it", be it a nail or a stake, there are times when things deeply embedded are difficult to remove straight away, as they are extremely firm and won't come out easily. When faced with such situations, what do you do? I've had similar experiences myself, trying to pull something out straight with all my might, but it wouldn't budge. It could be thick or solid, and in the case of wood, as it ages, it becomes harder to remove. However, when you shake it, you create some space, and then you can pull it out.

What does it mean to shake it? It's like the state of oscillation when things get better, then worse, then better again, and worse again—this is what I mean by shaking. When you think it's getting better, it worsens again. But when you continue with faith, it improves once more. You feel relieved, but

then it worsens again. This is the state of oscillation. It's not just a one-time occurrence; there are multiple oscillations. It's the cycle of getting better and worse, repeating itself. And it is through this process that you can even pull out deeply embedded stakes."

Indeed, you are right. Because it is a long-standing illness, it is only natural that it won't get better all at once. It's different from catching a slight cold, resting well, and then getting better. When it comes to a long-term illness that lasts for one year, three years, five years, or in some cases, even ten or twenty years, the roots are deep, and it's simply not possible to improve drastically in one go. It requires being shaken repeatedly, over and over again, and gradually pulled out.

"Because it is a long-standing illness, it won't get better all at once. However, the blessings will gradually be received. Even if the illness occurs from time to time, do not be troubled," is what is said. It may be troublesome to hear not to be troubled, but well, that's just how it is. You are absolutely right.

"Even if the illness occurs from time to time, do not be troubled." In other words, there is no need to worry excessively. It's as if the divine message is saying, "Don't keep panicking about every little setback." When viewed from the perspective of Kami-sama, there is no need for frantic rushing and flustering. You can rely on the Kami-sama, practice faith, and trust that assistance will be provided. It won't be a quick and easy process; you can't expect to be instantly cured. Trying to force a rapid resolution could be overwhelming and even jeopardize your life.

So, even if there are temporary setbacks and you find the process challenging, the divine is gradually helping you and replenishing your strength little by little. Each time there is a removal of obstacles, you may feel tired and drained, but you also experience improvement. As you improve, the divine removes another layer of obstacles. This cycle repeats itself, and you gradually become better and better.

Therefore, regardless of occasional setbacks or relapses, there's no need to fret and think, "Oh no, what am I going to do?" It is perfectly natural to experience such ups and downs in the process of healing. Exactly, you are spot on. When it comes to a prolonged illness, it won't be cured all at once. Just like a firmly driven stake that needs to be shaken to be pulled out, healing won't happen instantly. "Gradually, the divine blessings will be received." This message is repeated over and over again. "A firmly driven stake won't come out without shaking," and "A prolonged illness won't improve all at once." These statements emphasize the gradual process of healing. "Gradually, the divine blessings will be received," it's reiterated once more. "Even if the illness occurs from time to time, do not be troubled," this is said four times in total. It encourages not to keep fretting about the temporary setbacks.

"Have gratitude for the divine removals and receive blessings." This part is crucial. "Gratitude for divine removals" and "Do not be troubled," because right at this very moment, the divine is in the process of pulling out the negativities. Isn't that something to be thankful for?

Indeed, it is a comforting and profound message. The divine is steadily working to remove the obstacles, and each time they are taken away, it is a blessing. Rather than being disheartened by temporary setbacks, the message advises us to appreciate the ongoing process of healing and be grateful for the divine assistance. "Yes, because it hurts, it's fine," but if you try to escape like this, what will happen? The stake will remain stuck, right? The deeply embedded stake is causing suffering and difficulties in one's life. Even if a person is trying their best to live, things don't go well because of that stake. It's piercing through their body, mind, finances, relationships, work, family, school, everywhere. This deeply embedded stake brings suffering. That's why Kami-sama is trying to pull it out for us. That's why it's like, "Isn't it something to be thankful for?" It's indeed something to be grateful for. That's why, even if occasional illnesses occur, don't think of it

as a problem. Because it's just how things are. If it's a long-standing illness, it's even more natural. Each time, Kami-sama is doing a thankful, valuable, and awe-inspiring "take care" for us. So, you should say, "Thank you," and receive the blessings. That's what it means.

In summary, the passage emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and appreciating Kami-sama's efforts to remove the deeply embedded problems (symbolized by the stake) in our lives. Even if occasional setbacks or illnesses occur, it is essential to be thankful for Kami-sama's "take care" and continue to receive blessings with gratitude. Indeed, if we sincerely practice faith, we truly want to receive Kami-sama's blessings. Whether it's for the things that happened yesterday and today, or for long-standing issues that have been with us since birth, we wish to receive Kami-sama's blessings and be thankful for them. Sometimes, it may take time, even ten or twenty years, but we want Kami-sama to remove those deep-rooted issues from the very core of our being. That's right, deep-rooted issues indeed take time to resolve, whether they are physical, emotional, financial, relational, or work-related problems. It applies to any kind of illness or issue within a family as well. However, with faith, we can receive blessings, but the deeper the root, the more time it may take.

Even if we seem to improve and then experience setbacks, it's like trying to remove a deeply driven nail – it requires gentle shaking to loosen it. So, it's natural for the process to have ups and downs. But in those moments, we should refrain from panicking and exclaiming loudly, "Oh no, oh no!" Instead, we should remain patient and grateful for the blessings being received during the process.

**Exactly! Now is the time to receive blessings and be grateful.**

**(III Shinkun 2 - 47)**

The merciful Kami-sama is saying, "Now, practice faith and receive blessings." Kami-sama is currently trying to remove the negative elements from our lives and bestow blessings upon us. So, let us humbly ask for and receive these blessings, saying, "Please grant us your gracious blessings."

Kami-sama advises us to practice faith diligently so that we can receive blessings and prosper. By stopping the negative aspects within ourselves and spreading positivity to our family, children, and grandchildren, we can create a flourishing environment. Therefore, let us firmly commit ourselves to faith and follow Kami-sama's guidance. Absolutely, life is full of ups and downs, and we may encounter challenging situations along the way. However, even in those difficult times, we should continue to practice faith and receive blessings. When we persistently practice faith, regardless of the circumstances, we will undoubtedly receive blessings. So, instead of being swayed by the fluctuations of life—whether things seem to be improving or getting worse—we should steadfastly practice faith and receive blessings from the very root of our being. Let us seek to receive the blessings that cut through the root of our problems through devoted faith. That is the kind of faith I hope for everyone to have.

Indeed, each day is precious, and today's practice of faith is important. Let us cherish the teachings and guidance received from the divine presence of Konko Daijin and practice faith diligently alongside them. As we engage in our daily spiritual training, let us put forth effort in our own lives and within our families. Today is a day for our spiritual development and growth. It is like tending to our family business, so let us earnestly dedicate ourselves to the practice of faith. Thank you for your heartfelt prayers.



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