

(Summary of sermon, April 12, 2009)

“Follow Me” [John 21: 18-25]

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The scene from the Bible which I have chosen today begins as follows: “Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following”(20). This disciple whom Jesus especially loved was John, who wrote the Gospel according to John. We can understand the reason if we read the passage from verses 21 to 24, particularly the description in verse 24: “This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things.” The disciple John was able to write this gospel because John lived so intimately with Jesus that Jesus, they said, gave special love to him; and listening to the words of the real Jesus, John understood Jesus Himself in reality. Therefore, through John, we also could meet and know Jesus intimately.

Another disciple appears in this passage of the Bible. It is Peter who is described in verse 21: “Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, ‘But Lord, what *about* this man?’” We understand how concerned Peter was about John. Peter must have been strongly conscious of John, if he did not consider him as his rival. In fact, their relationship was close; they had become disciples of Jesus at the same time, and their occupation was the same, that of fishermen. After becoming disciples, they followed Jesus as if emulating one another. However, when the time of Jesus’s crucifixion came, they both went away from Jesus, deserting Him. After the Resurrection, when Jesus Himself appeared to the disciples again, Peter and John were in the group of disciples. In this way, although they had become disciples at the same time and later had deserted Jesus, now Peter and John once again were with the resurrected Jesus. It is therefore natural that Peter should have been anxious about John. To Peter’s question, “But, Lord what *about* this man?” Jesus answered, “If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me.” This verse means that we need not worry about other people and that we should follow Him. In other words, it is essential that each of us should follow Jesus, and furthermore, each of us has our own particular way of following Jesus. Our way is different from others’ ways and cannot be compared to others’ ways. From this, I learned a very important meaning. These verses are what Jesus told us after the Resurrection. Before, Peter and John had the same way of living. However, after the Resurrection, these disciples began to live different lives from each other, each being given a particular mission. This is the way of living given to the disciples after the Resurrection. Jesus teaches that we are not able to discriminate which mission is greater or inferior, I perceive. This advice is the same for us, isn’t it?

Today we are holding our Easter service. Easter is the time to begin a new life. It is the time we are given new missions from God. There must be a particular mission to each person entrusted by God. By finding it out and carrying it out, we

begin our lives newly according to our Lord, and this is the appropriate faith and belief for Easter Service, today. Our mission cannot be compared with other people's and it is not necessary for it to be appraised by others. The mission is given to each one of us by God.

Factually, afterwards, Peter and John had quite different lives. Peter was sent to do missions all over the world as an essential member of the first church, and he fulfilled his mission as an evangelist. John, to whom Jesus entrusted the care of his Mother, Mary, accepted Her, and living with Her, he accomplished his mission as a leader and sustainer of one church. It cannot be told which of their lives was greater or happier. God has prepared a mission or a way of life for each one of us. We each must take a faithful step toward our mission, and this is the crucial step for Christians. Easter is the time we think of our new mission, find it out and become convinced of it.