

1Jn 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

5:14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

5:15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

From today's sermon

I am a child, and I cling to the Lord. I cling constantly to the hand of the Lord Jesus. In stillness of day and in the wind of night.

How can I be afraid, how can I run away, how can I be blessed to travel in the hands of the gentle Lord, to leave everything in His tender care?

Quietly this morning, we want to meditate on the One to whom we can lean.

What a blessing it is to be able to travel, to leave everything in His gentle hands.

The fathers who nurtured us are now in the bosom of this kind God.

If a child asks nothing of the Father, the Father must feel sad. Why doesn't the child depend on him? Does he think that he does not have the power to respond to this request? Does he give up on the idea that God will not listen to him even if he wishes?

What kind of feelings do we have toward God the Father?

If we know well who God the Father is, we can know that this petition will be heard. Let us go forward together this week in our father-son relationship with God, no matter the storms and difficulties.

Good morning, everyone.

August has come around the time of Obon. The nights have been getting easier and easier to bear.

Today, Shobara Church is holding a service to commemorate those who have been called. I welcome everyone to this service.

In Japan, during the Obon season, we are supposed to welcome our ancestors and communicate with them. In other words, the souls from the world of the dead (higan) come to this world (koigan).

In Christianity, we, who are in this world, turn our hearts to those who live in heaven, where we live eternal lives.

Speaking of different axes of direction, I experienced two major events last week.

As I was driving back to Tojo after the Shobara Church service, I received a phone call from the wife of the former principal of Tojo High School, informing me that the former principal had passed away suddenly at the age of 69 after only a few days in the hospital. We had proposed a sister school relationship with an American high school, which he had accepted, and we had been in constant contact with him for ten years after his retirement. On Monday, I visited him at his wake.

I usually try to treat all religions with respect, but I hope you will forgive my rudeness just for today. I had no idea what the sutra chanting at the funeral meant, and the wife kept blinking her eyes for more than 30 minutes, probably 4-5 times a second throughout the entire service. At the end of the wake, during the family's greeting, she said that it had happened so suddenly that she did not understand why I was standing here now to greet her.

In my mind, I was thinking of his kindness, his passion for education, his ideas, and his daily and nightly thoughts about how to make the community prosperous, and how he always kept in touch with us even after he retired. Why is this? Because there is a certain salvation here. We are helpless in the face of death. We are helpless to those who go and to those who are left behind. We are helpless. No one has the means to resist death. But Christianity does. The Lord takes my hand. Please join me in singing this song.

Chant 490 "I am a Child

- 1 I am a little child, I cling to the Lord
Though I am small, I have faith.
I will always cling to the hand of the Lord Jesus.
In stillness of day and in windy night

- 2 I will cling to the Lord, who should make me afraid.
For the Spirit of God is with me.
I will always cling to the hand of the Lord Jesus.
In stillness of day and in windy night

- 3 In the morning when the sun is shining, I will cling to the Lord.
In the stormy night, I will pray.
In the hand of Jesus, my Lord, I will always cling.

In the still of the day and in the windy of the night

4 When I draw my last breath, I will bow to the Lord.
Though the heavens and the earth crumble and fall.
I will always cling to the hand of the Lord Jesus.
In stillness of day and in the wind of night

Chant 651: "The Lord take my hand

1 He will take my hand
Why should I be afraid or run away?
In His gentle hands I'll leave everything to Him
What a blessing it is to be able to travel

2 Sometimes it rains, sometimes it winds
Sometimes it rains, sometimes it winds Sometimes it's hard, but I don't think about it
In the Lord's tender hands, I leave everything to Him
What a blessing it is to be able to travel

3 How long we walk, how far we go
As the Lord wills it, and as He wills it.
In the Lord's tender hands, I leave everything to Him
What a blessing to be able to travel

4 No one can reach the great river
With the Lord's hand on me, I'll cross it without any difficulty.
In the Lord's gentle hands, I'll leave everything to Him
What a blessing to be able to travel!

Oh, I feel deeply that Christianity has this assurance. The Lord, Jesus, has my hand, and He will never let go of it. It is a world where we can understand, feel safe, and accept death with peace, serenity, and gratitude. I truly, truly believe that. And I am so glad I became a believer in Christianity. I think over and over again in my heart that being a Christian is the best thing

ever. Why is that? Because God the Father, who is powerful, holds us as infants and rescues us. In the quiet of the day and in the windy of the night. In the smooth sailing of life and in the adversity of a terrible storm with a headwind.

I could hardly stand still to tell my teacher's wife and family members of this peace and assurance. I wished I had God's hymn here, the hymn "I am a child and I cling to the Lord," or the message of the Lord Jesus' loving guidance, I just gazed at His wife's profile.

The next experience I had was two days later, last Wednesday.

My niece was a Christian, very much like her uncle, and always went to visit him all the time and took care of him with great enthusiasm. His father's brother, who resembled his late father. The Christian sisters saw their father's image in him and prayed for and served their uncle, who was a kind man. My uncle was healthy enough to ride his bicycle to go shopping, but one day he fell on his bicycle and was unable to move. After simple orthopedic treatment, he was supposed to be discharged from the hospital, but we had to watch his condition deteriorate. The Christian sisters thought with all their might that they could do more for their uncle, that he would recover and get well again, but the situation was so contrary to their expectations that the family had no choice but to give up on the chance for a cure. The Christian sisters did not give up and continued to search for a way to cure him. She finally had to be transferred to a hospital that did not give much attention to her rehabilitation and only waited for her to die. In the midst of all this, there was a good thing. In the old hospital, only family members were allowed to visit him, but in the new hospital, visitors other than family members were allowed. I visited the hospital room with my sisters, hoping to meet their uncle. In a hospital with little treatment available and with little staffing, my uncle felt lonely and alienated, as if he were being stabbed through and through. The sisters were intensely saddened and shed tears, saying they could not bear to see their uncle, who was still conscious, feel the sting of abandonment. My heart was fixed. I believed in God. I had an inexpressible assurance in my heart that God would work out salvation in such a closed situation.

5:13 I have written these things to you so that you may realize that you who believe in the name of the Son of God have eternal life.

5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in God, that we shall not be in any way wronged.

5:14 For we have this confidence in God, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

5:15 And if we know that whatever we ask, He hears us, we know that what we have asked of Him has already been granted.

We are infants. This is what we are. This is the reality. We are nothing more than a little leaf blowing in the wind. But there is a hand that protects us. It is a strong hand. It is the hand of our Lord Jesus, the hand of God the Father, and the hand of the Holy Spirit.

Even though my uncle was in the midst of such difficulties, he welcomed me graciously with a soft appearance, without questioning or being offended by my sudden and unexpected visit without any forgiveness beforehand. The visit lasted 15 minutes. After the greeting, we talked for a while and then sang the song, "Jesus, the Loving God, is with Us. To my surprise, my uncle sang along with me. When I asked him how he knew it, he said it was because it was the same as the shoka that the father and son sang. As I sang the words of the hymn, he sang the words clearly.

The next song was "I am an Infant.

1 I am a little child, I cling to the Lord
Though I am small, I have faith
I will always cling to the hand of the Lord Jesus
In stillness of day and in windy night

2 I will cling to the Lord, who should make me afraid.
For the Spirit of God is with me.
I will always cling to the hand of the Lord Jesus.
In stillness of day and in windy night

3 In the morning when the sun is shining, I will cling to the Lord.
In the stormy night, I will pray.
In the hand of Jesus, my Lord, I will always cling.
In the still of the day and in the windy of the night

4 When I draw my last breath, I will bow to the Lord.
Though the heavens and the earth crumble and fall.
I will always cling to the hand of the Lord Jesus.
In stillness of day and in the wind of night

Again, my uncle sang with me. I had the assurance that God was indeed here with us, working and comforting us.

We prayed together. I prayed with him that God, who is so loving and compassionate, is with us, and that through His death on the cross and resurrection, He has opened for us the way of forgiveness and life. That the Lord lives in the hearts of those who thankfully believe in and accept Him, always encouraging, comforting, and helping us at all times. That He will help us overcome difficulties with His strong hand. As I prayed, tears welled up in my uncle's eyes and became a single stream. I thank God. God is alive. I believe with all my heart and from the core of my soul that He lives and loves us, that He never leaves His children in the midst of difficulties, that He does not abandon or forsake them, and that He will risk His life to help them as they ask for help. And we know that when He hears that request for help, if it is worthy of being given, He will grant it immediately. Just as I believed that God would surely pour out His comfort to my uncle, we can take God the Father as our source of comfort. What only God can do, God will do. We know from experience that it is in times of desperation that God comes to the rescue. God is a person of great love. And He wants us to live in love. He wants us to trust Him with all our hearts and lean on Him, believing that He is the one who is full of love and will respond to our desires.

I think we all have the feeling that we miss our children who used to say "daddy, daddy" so sweetly when they were little, but now that they are grown up, they don't depend on us anymore. However, God for us and we in front of God can never be like that. We are helpless. We are weak infants. But we are infants loved by a God full of power. We are infants of God who loves us with His life. Why would we be afraid or run away? What a blessing it is to be able to travel, leaving everything in the hands of the gentle Lord!

Prayer; Heavenly Father, thank you for today's worship. What a blessing that the One to whom we should lean more, the One who hears our petitions and helps us all the way without giving up on us in any difficult time, is with us! God is always facing us, saying, "Sweet child, say whatever you wish, for I am your Father. God is always facing us, saying, "Sweet child, say whatever you want, for I am your Father. Please give us peace, tranquility, and a good future. Please bring all those who are suffering into God's salvation and peace. Bless our families and the people in our community. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.