

Our Breath, Like a Spring Breeze, Can Revive Everything

Message by Kyoshu-sama

(the fourth and present spiritual leader, Yoichi Okada)

At Risshun (beginning of spring) service, February 4, 2009.

Hall of Worship, Atami Sacred Grounds, Japan.

Welcome everyone to today's Risshun (beginning of spring) service.

With a deep sense of awe, I realize that God prepared an infinite number of divine particles at the beginning of His creation. God's plan was to give birth to us, His divine children. We human beings are being nurtured as His instruments to carry on His divine mission. I believe these countless divine particles—our individualized souls—possess the potential to be a Messiah. *Messiah* is the word that expresses the essence and reality of these divine particles. All human beings are connected to this name *Messiah*.

An individualized soul, or a divine particle, is a human's true essence, and belongs to God. As I just mentioned, I believe that the term *Messiah* is a divine expression. Meishu-sama said, "God is one and many at once." This means that an infinite number of divine particles is part of God, and exist in all of us.

Meishu-sama was newly born as a Messiah following God's plan for the Creation. Since we are all connected to Meishu-sama, we are being raised and nurtured to become newly born as Meishu-sama was.

Messiah is the term to describe the medium of all the power and wisdom of God to save humanity and establish Paradise on Earth.

Because we contain divine particles from God, our precious existence is a tremendous blessing, beyond our understanding. However, human beings have not been aware that the divine essence within us contains the potential to be a *Messiah*. We have ignored and neglected God. And still, God forgives us and continues to raise and nurture us in order to make us His true children, his instruments of His Creation.

Let Us Be Sorry and Turn Back to God

Meishu-sama composed the following poem in 1935:

*I've become a person who bows in front of the altar and pray[s],
After repenting my sins of going against God's wish.*

In 1952, he wrote another verse:

*It is nothing but the power of the Messiah,
Which can revive the present world,*

Which is so beclouded with sins and is about to perish.

In these verses, Meishu-sama is stating that as a human being, he regretted that he had been disobeying God's wish, and repented in front of the altar. His humble and noble attitude shown in these poems is something beyond my understanding.

At the same time, he came to the realization and the conviction that humanity was about to perish because of its disregard of God's plan. Instead, humanity is being forgiven, welcomed, and nurtured by the power of God and the Messiah. The realization that the power of the Messiah exists inside all of us is the greatness brought to us by Meishu-sama. I feel extremely fortunate to have realized this.

Even Meishu-sama admitted that he had been disobeying God's will. Naturally, we also need to realize in what ways we have been negligent and forgotten God's wishes. We must admit it from the bottom of our hearts and be sorry for our ignorance. Only when we become aware that we need forgiveness, will we realize that we have been forgiven and are being given a second chance. True gratitude comes from this realization.

Our souls are God's divine essence with everlasting radiance. This is the true reality. Without our divine essence how could we become children of God and serve as His representatives and instruments?

Our individualized souls are gifts from God and God allows us to use them as if they are our own. Our minds, our egos and human consciousness also belong to God as well. God is continuously nurturing our souls and guiding us.

God invites us to be newly born in heaven as His true children. We can succeed and inherit His eternal life. God's unconditional love for us is the essence and embodiment of true love. Thus, we are already abundantly filled with God's complete forgiveness and overflowing love.

Practicing love for others is our spiritual training to recognize and confirm that this love fills the universe. Being united with Meishu-sama, we try to return to God. Through this spiritual training and practice, we begin to realize that criticizing and judging others is a reflection of criticizing and judging ourselves. We will understand the teaching of Meishu-sama that tells us to "judge not" and to put it into action.

Understand and Practice Meishu-sama's Teachings In a Universal Way

The members of the Izunome Kyodan are making daily efforts to strengthen their connection to Meishu-sama as a Messiah with the goal of improving and perfecting themselves and creating paradise-like conditions around them. I really appreciate your efforts.

As a result of Reverend Watanabe's New Year's message explaining this practice further, I understand that you are praying the "Sonen Practice" continuously, with the belief that paradise exists within yourself, even if on a small scale. You are trying to express your internal heaven through your words and actions by embodying our goal of truth, virtue, and beauty. This practice of Sonen leads to love for others. You are trying to practice it first in the smallest unit of our society, the family, and then build paradise in your mind and heart and expand the circle of heaven from your home to your communities and to the society at large. I pray that Meishu-sama's blessings be with you.

At today's Risshun service, we recited three poems by Meishu-sama. The first poem says:

*The winter is over and the spring has come.
Our spiritual work has entered the time,
To bloom and send its fragrance widely.*

In this poem, Meishu-sama is expressing his joy that the time for our work to develop and advance has arrived.

Meishu-sama's third poem states:

*The true salvation that has been awaited for long
Has finally appeared.
Wake up and recognize it,
People all over the world.*

This poem prophesized something wonderful: our membership outside of Japan is now over one million strong. Members from Thailand and ten other countries are present at today's Risshun service. I imagine that Meishu-sama must be very happy. He looks at the members from Japan and many other countries being awakened to this "true salvation" and gathering at the Sacred Grounds. He created this special place where we can pray and study. Meishu-sama considers us with love as his own children returning to heaven.

A few days ago, I prayed and blessed 50,000 Sacred Focal Points for prospective new members in Africa. The members in Africa have cultivated a strong and pure faith. They are instrumental in leading many people to Meishu-sama's true salvation. This fact is refreshing and impressive. I myself can learn much from their faith.

Meishu-sama started our group under the name *Dainihon Kannon Kai* (Japan Kannon Society) on January 1, 1935. As the work developed, he renamed it *Sekai Meshiya Kyo*, (formerly known as Church of World Messianity) on February 4, 1950. It is very significant that the word *Sekai*

(world) was placed as the prefix for the name of this newly-formed organization. There are many different languages, customs, nations, and religions in the world. I believe Meishu-sama formed our organization to bring salvation to all people regardless of their beliefs, ethnic background, or country of origin.

I am now renewing my vow to understand and interpret Meishu-sama's teachings in a more universal way to include various teachings and philosophies of different religions of the world. I have to make more effort to learn how to apply and put Meishu-sama's teachings into practice.

During the service today, we listened to the reading of Meishu-sama's teaching "Pragmatism." (Vol. 3, Article 63) It states:

"The way one expresses and practices faith should show refinement and balance, absent of a dogmatic demeanor. Avoid being overbearing or disrespectful."

I believe that if we continue to study his teachings and acquire their essence and aim to apply them universally, then we will be able to get rid of dogmatic demeanor and an overbearing attitude inside of us.

Risshun Signifies a Turning Point for the World

Today, February 4th is Risshun, or the beginning of spring. Meishu-sama explained to us that this day signifies not only the changes in nature, but also the changes in the world, an important turning point in a year. Many important messages were shared and events were held on this day of Risshun throughout the history of our church. Meishu-sama composed many poems and verses celebrating Risshun. One of them reads as follows:

*The joy of seeing this great work of God,
Finally developing and advancing more and more,
Becomes deeper and deeper at every Risshun.*

Although Risshun is an annual celebration, Meishu-sama acknowledged it as an important turning point in God's work, and welcomed it with renewed joy each year. What does this teach us? God constantly prepares new activities, and is always training and nurturing us for our progress and spiritual growth. We need to respond to this nurturing, and serve in God's work. Meishu-sama wanted us to realize this idea in the above poem.

For example, it is a general truth that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. We recognize this, but also know that this daily occurrence is viewed from earth and that the earth is constantly rotating around the sun. We accept this fact as truth and take it for granted, but for ancient people

who believed the earth was the center of the universe and that the sun rotated around the earth, it must have been a revolutionary idea, completely changing their view of the universe.

At present, we can easily understand the viewpoint of looking at the sun from the earth. Perhaps we can also imagine looking at the earth from the sun and even looking at the sun, the earth, and the solar system from another vantage point somewhere in the universe. Humanity understands these new concepts by exploring the unknown world and making new discoveries. By doing so, however, I have a feeling that we could be in the process of remembering those memories of when we divine particles were allowed to participate in the creation of the universe in heaven. In this way, we may be taking the path of our progress and growth, while being brought to remember the activities in heaven.

Meishu-sama taught us that the world is at a great turning point. The second verse we chanted today during the service states:

*The great turning (change-over) of the world,
Is advancing day by day,
Even though it is not visible to our human eyes.*

This verse was composed by Meishu-sama in 1952 for the Risshun service of that year. He is telling us that the great turning point of the world is moving forward at this very moment.

I believe Meishu-sama is encouraging us to change our thinking patterns, so that all our views can evolve and progress, without being restricted by established ideas. Each of us is the sum total and synthesis of all our ancestors. I believe that achieving a transition within us would lead to our salvation, eventually extending to the salvation of the world.

For example, purification is an important teaching by Meishu-sama. My preconceived idea was that disease, and other sufferings, are simply negative, destructive outcomes and manifestations. However, Meishu-sama is guiding me through this teaching so that I can realize that God is causing purifications to occur because of his love and forgiveness. Seeing purification as a wonderful blessing is actually helping me make progress through this new understanding. For me, this teaching of purification is forcing me to radically change my previous way of thinking, viewing, and living. Much like the radical change from the earth-centered point of view to the sun-centered perspective of the universe, I must change my way of thinking. Through my studying of Meishu-sama's teachings and by seeing, hearing, or experiencing many different matters and events, I wish to achieve spiritual growth and progress. In this way, I can be freed from old views, and accept and perceive everything from a more advanced, deeper viewpoint.

Break Through Impasse and Move Forward

Meishu-sama repeatedly pointed out that even with progress and advancement in our civilization, impasses arose in many fields. He called upon us to break through these predicaments to achieve resolution. Simply put, the “impasse” in the present world is a result of our living in the physical world and not in the spiritual world. In other words, we have been mistakenly living a human-centered life and not a God-centered life.

No matter how much effort we make for our progress and advancement, we cannot expect the true evolution of humanity if we continue to have the misguided idea that our ego is our own and continue to lead a human-centered life based on the desires of our egos. To address this idea, Meishu-sama wrote:

“I believe it is my mission to help remove the animalistic nature from human beings and cause them to evolve into true human beings.

Since the basic requirement to achieve this end is to eradicate the materialistic way of thinking, this effort may be called the work of reforming human beings.”

[Mushin Ron ni tsuite]

As I have stated, we are currently at an impasse. The way for us to overcome this impasse and advance to become true human beings is for us to return to the original birthplace of our divine essence, that is the dimension of the “self of beginning.” We must seek to sense what Meishu-sama meant by stating, “God really exists.” For us to evolve into “true human beings” means that we have to become true children of God.

God is an eternal God. God is the creator of everything and giver of all life. God is the source of all power and all blessings. The key for us human beings to truly evolve is to worship and honor God as our true parent. With the lack of this attitude, the flow of eternal life within us has been stagnant, and everything—including our minds and bodies—has withered, and our daily lives have been at an impasse and deadlocked. We have to admit this to ourselves.

For the purpose of forgiving and saving us when we are in such a situation, God has already achieved the great transition—the change from night to day and from the world of darkness to the world of daylight in the realm of heaven. We have to recognize this now. The power, which achieved this major transition from night to day, is what Meishu-sama called “the power of Messiah.” I believe this power is constantly working on us since we live in this level, or dimension, of the physical realm. This power is trying to teach us and guide us to accept everyone as children of God.

The true path to progress and evolution is not the same path that we have been on. It is the path that constantly reminds us that heaven is the source of life. We must return to the divine origin of our consciousness. For God, our progress, development, and evolution are aimed to make us His own children and achieve His wish for the Creation.

We are not trying to improve ourselves and make progress so that others can admire us, and so that we can be proud of ourselves, or become better than others. Whenever we attain some knowledge; accomplish something; or help others, I think we should express our gratitude to God by saying: "God, it was you who worked through me and achieved this. Thank you, God." Thus, we are trying to improve our attitude so that we can become the kind of person who is always grateful to God in whatever situation we happen to be in.

Being grateful and giving joy to God are important steps in becoming true children of God. The phrases "return to the original heaven" and "surrender to God," means that we are being nurtured and trained, through different daily experiences, lessons, and feelings so that we can acquire this grateful attitude. Perhaps we think little of our daily experiences. Let us put our trust in God and let us continue our daily training and nurturing.

Return to the "Beginning Self" Through Sonen Practice

The same principle holds true with Sonen Practice. We pray the Sonen as part of our training. This training is not for us to be satisfied and pleased but for God and Meishu-sama to be satisfied and pleased. Just as nature has its cycles, our ego and consciousness does as well. We have come from the beginning of the Creation and have arrived at the last phase of the Creation. We now exist as our "present selves." Our duty is to carry with us all of the elements and activities of the world, which are connected to us, and return from the last phase back to the original phase and thus, to serve God in the final step of His great work of circulation.

Meishu-sama often used expressions such as "a major change" or "a 180 degree turnaround." I have a feeling that these expressions mean that we serve in God's work of circulation by returning to the world of our origin, the world of cause. If this is the case, through the Sonen practice we can surrender all of these feelings, thoughts, and elements within us to Meishu-sama and serve in God's work. It is because everything in the universe including all the elements, all of our feelings and thoughts (joy, anger, sorrow and happiness) and all the activities of the world, are connected to the "present self." Thus it is possible for us to offer everything to God, the creator of the universe.

It is important to consider in what stage of our thoughts should we

surrender everything to God and Meishu-sama. If we try to surrender at the level of our ego and human consciousness or the present self of the last phase of creation, our own self-interest and our convenience would take precedence because our feelings and thoughts are transient and changeable.

Our divine essence, which is a divine particle from God, is directly connected to Meishu-sama. Carrying this divine essence within us, we are allowed to dwell in this physical world, which is the last phase and terminus in God's creation, so that we can serve in the works of heaven. Therefore, we can take all the works which are connected to our "present self," and return to the dimension of heaven where our essence resides, namely, the "beginning and original self." Only when we return there, can we surrender everything to Meishu-sama and leave everything in God's hands.

When we do this, our attitude is not to surrender to God by ourselves, but to do so together with Meishu-sama, and together with many people, because Meishu-sama is surrendering all our issues all the time, on our behalf. Trying to serve in God's work in this manner is an important part of our spiritual training to enhance our evolution and become true children of God.

Inherit Eternal Life Through Our Inhaling and Exhaling

God is accomplishing His will using us, inhaling and exhaling our breath while we repeat the process of returning to God and surrendering to Him. Our breath is not simply for the physical function of living that is generally understood by people. As I explained at Meishu-sama's Birthday Service in December last year, breathing is an important component through which our "self of beginning" and "self of end" can circulate and exchange.

When we inhale, we can do so with the consciousness of taking in the breath that Meishu-sama is breathing out into us. When we exhale, we can do so with the awareness of releasing while Meishu-sama is welcoming and accepting everything from us. Through our breathing, God is trying to connect us to Meishu-sama, and transmit His wish, and let us inherit and realize the eternal life. We can be grateful for this great blessing and respond to it.

In concluding my message for the Risshun service today, I pray that God's blessings be shared with each one of you who is connected to Meishu-sama; everything will return to Meishu-sama and will be revived through your inhaling and exhaling breath, just as the breeze of spring revives everything. I offer my praise to God who is accomplishing the will of the Messiah.

Thank you very much.