

WE WILL RETURN TO HEAVEN AND LIVE WITH GOD

Message by Kyoshu-sama, Our present Spiritual Leader (Yoichi Okada)
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Hall of Worship, Atami, Japan.

Greetings to everyone, and welcome to today's Risshun Service.

With a deep sense of awe, I acknowledge that the Supreme God is vividly alive within each one of us, within each and every existence. God's purpose in creating the universe, I believe, is to make all of humanity return to His Heaven, and make them to be newly born as His true children, in order to establish paradise on earth.

We are all connected with Meishu-sama, who was newly born as messiah following this intention of God. Each one of us is being nurtured and raised to cultivate the mind to serve God, together with all of humanity, with their parents and ancestors, and along with all of creation.

I am very grateful that today, on this day of Risshun, the beginning of spring, I am allowed to praise God, who is with Meishu-sama, together with all of you, with a fresh frame of mind, and pray that His Wish be accomplished in each one of us.

The Sacred Grounds at the Center of Our Consciousness

I am very happy to hear that you members of the Izunome Kyodan are continuing your daily efforts in the practice of "Sonen of Gratitude," and "one extra gesture of love for others" to turn your Sonen, thought and consciousness, which you regarded as yours, to the Sonen where God and Meishu-sama can manifest themselves. And, through this, you are trying to share the joy of bringing happiness to others with as many people as possible. I am grateful and happy that you are making these efforts.

I also appreciate your efforts and your dedication for the construction and improvement of the prototypes of paradise, the Sacred Grounds in Hakone, Atami and Kyoto, which were originally created by Meishu-sama. By serving in this God's work, we can re-affirm that the heaven which is the "eternal Sacred Ground" exists at the center of our consciousness. Thus, Meishu-sama is cultivating our minds so that we can reside in heaven. For this, we can all be grateful to Meishu-sama.

God Wants to Bring Us, His Spiritual Children, Back to Heaven

There exists a Consciousness which is the source of everything. We call this

Consciousness 'God.' God is an eternal Consciousness, eternal Life and eternal Soul.

Meishu-sama composed a series of verses under the title of "Praising God." One of them says, "Among all the living things on this physical world, none of them is left out of God's blessings." Through this verse, Meishu-sama acknowledges that everything that was created exists receiving God's blessings. He is praising God through this and other verses.

Heaven, which was prepared by God, is the dimension of the source of creation, and therefore, humanity and everything else that exist there, are in oneness with God. In Heaven, we are also in oneness with Meishu-sama; we are one with all of humanity, their parents and ancestors, and one with everything, together with Meishu-sama.

For this reason, we are "even now" united as one with Meishu-sama, with all of humanity, their parents and ancestors, and with everything in the universe. Because we are united with Meishu-sama, I believe we can return to and become one with God, through Meishu-sama.

God gave birth to us, as His own spiritual children and individualized souls of Himself. He endowed within us His own eternal Consciousness, eternal Life and eternal Soul. He sent us to this earth plane, and gave each one of us the consciousness of "self." God is advancing His plan of salvation of humanity and construction of Paradise on Earth, with the intention of bringing us, His children with self-awareness, back again to heaven, making us newly born as His true children who can live with Him in heaven.

God Is Working Constantly Within Us

While living on this earth plane, we naturally have to make a distinction between our public, official activities and our private activities. However, since everything is included within God's Plan of construction of paradise on earth, all of our life and activities can be regarded as official, public ones, from God's viewpoint.

Meishu-sama wrote, "In order to turn this world into paradise, we have to think of the basic elements constituting this world. After all, this world consists of individual human beings." What he meant is that salvation of each person and each home leads to salvation of the world. We need to regard our personal matters and our family matters as not just our personal and private matters, but as small-scale prototypes of all of humanity, and that they are closely related to all of humanity in the world.

God, together with Meishu-sama, is using us in every time and every place, ~~and~~ utilizing us always for His public activities, named "God's Plan." Even though I was aware of this, probably I did not recognize clearly in the past that God was definitely working and functioning within myself. It is not enough to become aware of this, but it is necessary for us to recognize it clearly as a definite fact, and express it; namely, to report it to God. For us

to express it in this way means nothing less than praising God.

In the past, rather than recognize that God is working constantly within us, we simply tried to find personal happiness for ourselves, or tried to promote our own righteousness or opinions. Humanity has only repeated this practice of putting priority on our own wish over God's wish in our prayers. God, who resides with Meishu-sama, forgave us, humanity, with His boundless love, and accomplished the turning from Night to Day in order to welcome us back to His heaven.

The Path of Salvation Has Already Been Prepared

Because this turning from night to day has already been achieved, the path of our salvation through which humanity can return to heaven has already been prepared. Salvation depends on whether we can have a firm belief that this path has been already prepared. Only because this path is already prepared, can we return to heaven through Johrei, and through other practices of salvation.

Meishu-sama said in his verse, "Though invisible to limited human sight, God's Plan has already been achieved in the world of spirit." We now live in the totally new phase of the world after the turning from the Age of Night to the Daylight Age. This brilliant bright light of the Daylight Age is shining at the center of the consciousness of each of us human beings, illuminating all corners of our minds and bodies, and purifying us.

Many problems and issues are coming up to the surface in every part of the world, and also numerous conflicts and discords are becoming manifest and apparent around us in our daily life. It is because God's Light is becoming apparent, illuminating those things that have been hidden within us, and welcoming us into heaven, which is the source of light.

In our daily life, we are guided by God to witness, hear and feel various things. That means that God is using us as His official, public vehicles and instruments, and God is working within us. There is an expression, "Man turns to God when in trouble." When we are suffering from something, we often feel the urge to pray to Him earnestly, asking for relief. We want to be freed from that suffering, and we want to get rid of that suffering. But, isn't God really working when we are in suffering? Let us remember that when we are suffering, that moment is the very time when God is encouraging us and powerfully working within us.

God Can Unite the Positive and the Negative for Greater Harmony

God has the power for greater harmony. When we feel suffering, it does not mean that God is not working within us or God has abandoned us, but in truth, God is letting us

know that He is in the process of accomplishing His Plan, uniting and harmonizing both the positive and the negative, bringing about the greater harmony. Meishu-sama composed a verse, “Open up your eyes and see the true state of God’s work. Beneath the surface of the destruction, God is busily using His hammer of construction.” Through this verse he is teaching us that destruction and construction are not two separate functions, but they are functioning together, simultaneously, as two sides of a coin.

When the process of destruction is affecting you, you might feel pain and suffering. But, destruction is certainly accompanied by a creative and positive process at the same time. For example, when you have some concern about your health, or other problems, and your mind is burdened with these worries, you often try to leave these difficulties, what you perceive as “negative,” in God’s hands, in your attempt to be relieved of them. But the best thing you can do is to leave these concerns in God’s hands as evidence of God’s work, of bringing together the positive and the negative and creating greater harmony.

Even if we don’t fully understand God’s intention, the first and the most important step is for us to recognize that God is working in any given situation, remembering that God has looked at the issue we have been worrying about, and has extended His helping hand to that particular point with His love and forgiveness. If once we remember it, even in a moment, since the path of salvation has been already prepared, we can have this thought, “I would like to return to heaven, together with all of humanity and all things, and would like to serve in God’s work for harmony, under the greater harmony of God.” Having such thought, offering such thought to God and leaving such thought of ours in God’s hands are the reasons for our existence. If we can express such thought and report it to God, God will cultivate and increase within us the kind of attitude to serve in the Daylight Age, together with everything in the universe.

We Offer Ourselves to God and Return to Heaven Through Monetary Donations

Another way for us to serve in God’s work is to give donation to God’s cause. For example, we offer money or give donation for the construction projects.

By the way, what does money mean in our life? When we buy or sell things in this present time, we use money, instead of exchanging things as we used to do in olden times. We use money for our economic activities, and therefore, money is the standard of value for all of creation. We are one with everything in the universe, and we cannot live without money, along with the blessings of everything in the universe.

We have been using everything in the universe, and money that represents it, as ours, and have been setting its price and freely using money to buy or sell things. We have been able to do these activities only because God allows us to do so. Everything in the

universe, including money, belongs to God. We ourselves, who have been using all things and money, belong to God, too. When we offer money to God in the form of donation, it really means that we return ourselves, along with money, to God, who is the original owner of everything.

We are entrusted with money by God and keep temporary custody of it, and we offer a part of that money to God. That is the outer form of donation, but in our thought, we can do this donation with the idea of offering ourselves to God and leaving ourselves in God's hands through Meishu-sama, and returning to the center of our consciousness called heaven, together with all of humanity and their parents and ancestors, and together with everything in the universe. That would be more in harmony with God's Will.

We have been using our mind and our bodies, money and everything freely, as our own, but God forgave us for such an attitude. That is why, through our service of donation, God is accepting us, and everything that is connected to us. In this sense, the fact that we can serve God through donation is a big blessing from God.

Whatever amount of money left with us after giving donation also belongs to God, entrusted to us by God for our temporary custody. Even when we use that money for our living and for our personal use, we can do so with the idea of saying to that money that we will serve God together, and return to heaven, which is the source of our life. This is our duty and the way of God's nurturing us, because our ultimate spiritual home is in heaven and we are the public, official vehicles and instruments of God.

The Love of God For Us, As Our True Spiritual Parent, Is So Great

The fact that God is raising us and bringing us up through Meishu-sama is an indication of God's deep, profound love for us, which is beyond our imagination. In our human relationships, if someone is disrespectful to us or was against us, we feel like blaming that person, or even retaliating and punishing that person. God is fully aware of our arrogant mind, with which we have ignored and neglected God, but He forgave us, does not try to destroy us completely, and even allows us to praise God and pray to Him and utter words of gratitude.

This is because God has a strong wish to raise us to become true children of God, and make us live in heaven, no matter what. This is how I feel about this. Truly, God's love for us is so deep and so great. Meishu-sama composed these two verses: "As I marvel at the vast and expansive beauty of the sky, I am always reminded of God's limitless, infinite love for me" (Prayer Book page 84), and "God's love and blessings for us are so great, higher than the highest mountains, and deeper than the deepest oceans." These verses truly express this truth.

God is not only our “natural parent”, but also our “foster parent” who is constantly nurturing us and raising us. We, together with Meishu-sama, would like to serve God, who is both our “natural parent” and “foster parent,” and respond even a little to His love so that He can be joyous, and share this God’s joy with everybody and everything.

In conclusion, I pray that the breath of life from God, who is with Meishu-sama, will be spread to everybody and everything through you, and would revive everything, like a spring breeze, and that those of you who are serving God in this way be able to live every day with hope and courage, with joy and a bright outlook. Thank you very much.

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