

Lk24:1 Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.

24:2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

24:3 Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

24:4 And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.

24:5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?

24:6 "He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee,

24:7 "saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' "

24:8 And they remembered His words.

24:9 Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

24:10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles.

24:11 And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.

24:12 But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.

Happy Easter, everyone.

[From today's sermon]

We saw death pass over the houses marked with the blood of the lamb. And manna fell from heaven for the people wandering in the wilderness.

At the Last Supper, Jesus took the bread and said, "This is my body, which is given for you." He took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Jesus also said, "I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they died. But whoever eats the bread that comes down from heaven will never die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. ... My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so those who eat me will live because of me." John 6:51

Jesus gave His body and blood, surrendered His life, died on the cross, but was resurrected. Just as Anpanman gave his face to people to eat, becoming powerless, yet gained a new face and rose again with renewed strength, Jesus was resurrected. We are living with such a Jesus.

Right now, the morning drama on NHK is featuring the story of the creators of Anpanman, Yasunari Yasunari and his wife. Yanaseta Takashi did not publicly declare himself a Christian, but when I read the lyrics of the song “Let's Make Living Bread,” I recall hearing that during the war, when he was barely surviving, he said, “I don't understand justice, and there is no such thing as a just war, but obtaining food to survive is the only necessary and just thing, and that is justice.”

“Let's Make Living Bread” Lyrics by Yanaseta Takashi

Let's make delicious bread, let's make living bread.

Babies are born naked, loaches are naked, frogs are naked.
But we cannot live without eating, we cannot endure hunger.
Even the smallest insect will die if it does not eat.
Let's make delicious bread, let's make living bread.
Let's make bread with our lives.

Gorillas are covered in fur and don't wear pants. Goldfish are naked, and earthworms are naked.
But they live just fine. They can't endure hunger.
Even the most important people will die if they don't eat. They will die. They will die.”

But is it just me who thinks there's something deeper to this song than just the meaning that we need bread to eat?

Let's make delicious bread. Let's make bread that's alive.
Let's make it with our lives. Let's make bread of life.
If we don't eat, we'll die. We'll die. We'll die.

What is “bread that is alive”? Does “bread of life” only mean something that keeps people alive as biological beings? What does “Let's make it with our lives, bread of life” mean? This

is a song sung by Jam-Oji, the creator of Anpanman, and his assistant Batako.

These words come to mind.

Matthew 4:4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

John 6:26 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, you are looking for me because you saw what I did, not because you ate the bread and had your fill.

6:27 Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For God the Father has entrusted him with it.”

6:28 Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?”

6:29 Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

6:30 They said to him, “What sign will you perform for us, that we may see and believe you? What will you do?

6:31 Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness. As it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'

6:32 Then Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven. My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

6:33 For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

6:34 They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

6:35 Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

“Anpanman's March’ by Yasunari Katsura,

“Why were we born? What should we do to live?

I can't answer that—I don't want to!”

“That's right—don't be afraid! For everyone's sake, love and courage are our only friends.

Ah, Anpanman, you kind-hearted one, go! To protect everyone's dreams!”

Anpanman, who offers his face to give people strength. When his strength wanes, Jam-Oji-san bakes a new face, and Anpanman is reborn. He then continues to fight evil and help people.

Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything,

but only faith that works through love.

Jesus took our sins upon Himself on the cross, accomplished redemption, paid the price for us, and set us free from sin and death. This is what Easter is all about—the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

24:1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.

24:2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,

24:3 and when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

24:4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in shining clothes appeared to them.

It was a wonderful morning of resurrection, a morning of victory. But there was confusion among the women.

The women had gone to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices, that is, to find His dead body and encounter Him. But they could not find it. Their purpose was not fulfilled.

Are we not also living according to the scenarios we have imagined in our minds? We think that if things go as we expect, everything is going smoothly, and if they do not, something is wrong. However, Easter is the day when a new scenario, a new story, begins—a story that surpasses our human thoughts, the story of God's resurrection.

Therefore, we do not fear unexpected events that defy our expectations. Many such events occur in our lives. They defy our assumptions, cause us anxiety, betray our expectations, confuse us, leave us at a loss, and lead us to sorrow and despair. However, this is not something to be pessimistic about.

24:4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes appeared to them.

24:5 The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

24:6 He is not here. He has risen! Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee:

24:7 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again."

"Why are you looking for the living among the dead?"

This can be literally translated as, "Why are you seeking the living among the dead... searching for him, trying to find him, demanding him, expecting him, thinking about him..."

Why were you seeking, hoping, and expecting to find Jesus there, where his body had been laid to rest? For the women who had gone to tend to his body, it was only natural to think that way. Jesus had already died, and his body was there. Why would they hope for or seek anything else? However, the matter had been fulfilled in a way that far exceeded their expectations.

What about us? Do we also seek God, the living One, among the dead, desiring and expecting Him to be there? Why? Jesus has risen, conquered death, and now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. We should not think such things. Is that truly the case?

When Luther was stuck in the religious reform movement and feeling down, his wife Catherine came into the room wearing mourning clothes. Luther asked, "Has someone been called to heaven?" She replied, "Your Lord Jesus Christ is dead." Luther was startled and then went on to push the religious reform movement forward with even greater strength. Katharina was an irreplaceable presence for Luther. Quoted from "God's Crayons" website

We are too conscious of ourselves and tend to be caught up in our own thoughts. We tend to think that our analysis, predictions, and judgments are always correct. We use other people's opinions and advice to reinforce our own thoughts, and we do not accept anything that does not agree with our own intentions.

24:9 They returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven disciples and to all the others.

24:10 The women who had seen this were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James. The other women who were with them also told this to the apostles.

24:11 But the apostles did not believe them, thinking their story was nonsense.

The disciples also regarded the women's testimony—what God had done for the women and what He had spoken to them—as foolish talk, nonsense, idle chatter, empty words, and baseless lies.

This lack of sensitivity to what God does and says is truly disheartening. Our antennas are pointed in the wrong direction, so we cannot catch the broadcasts on TV or radio, or the messages God is trying to convey to us. This is a major problem for humanity.

God's power is far beyond our thoughts and imagination. The dead are not among the dead, but among the living. This is the resurrection of Jesus.

We dismiss God's great work as foolish talk or nonsense. We sometimes dismiss His words as unrealistic. Then we wallow in pessimism and despair. Is that really okay?

“Why were we born? What should we do? Why do we live?

I can't answer that—I don't want to!”

“That's right—don't be afraid—love and courage are our only friends

Ah, Anpanman, you kind one—go! To protect everyone's dreams!”

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Hebrews 11:3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed by God's word, so that what we see was not made out of what was already there.

11:6 Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earn his approval.

“Why do you seek the living among the dead?

24:6 He is not here. He has risen! Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee.

Remember the word he spoke to you. Remember the word he spoke to you. This is the way we must live.

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The wind blows

over them, and they are gone, and their place is no longer found. But the word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:6–8)

1 Peter 1:23 You have been born again, not from perishable seed, but from imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

1:24 All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers, and the flowers fall.

1:25 But the word of the Lord endures forever.” This is the word that was proclaimed to you.

On this Easter morning, we are confident that we are not sustained by our own understanding, thoughts, or desires, but by the word of God, and that we are guided by God's salvation and works.

◇Prayer: Heavenly Father, we give thanks for this day of worship.

We often get caught up in our own thoughts, believing ourselves to be absolute, our thoughts to be absolute, and making snap judgments based on the little information we see or hear, quickly falling into anxiety or despair. But Jesus gave His life to save us and rose from the dead. Thank you for the wonderful, good news that our lives, which were in such dire straits, are connected to resurrection and eternal life in a way we cannot even imagine. Please lead all those who are suffering into God's salvation and peace. Bless our families and our community. Use us. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.