**Perfect Submission 2017 12 24**

**Luke 1:35-55 Pr. Hitoshi Adachi**

May the Light of Jesus Christ shine upon us in the midst of the world’s darkness!

Have you ever heard the Japanese word “Omakase?” It literally means “leaving it up to someone.” One of our friends and his wife took Satoko, my wife, and me to a Sushi restaurant their treat. He did not look at the menu at all and said “Omakase.” Of course, this depends on the sushi chef or sushi restaurant, in this case, the sushi chef was truly skilled and trustworthy. Our chef served the best sushi available that day.

After we enjoyed the sushi, a surprising bill was given to my friend. Although he did not show me how much he paid, the bill was rather reasonable considering how much high quality and yummy sushi we ate.

When you trust your sushi chef and say “Omakase”, you may enjoy the best sushi and have a truly surprising experience. In a sense, there are some risks and in the beginning you might feel some uncertainty, but if you can trust the chef who creates your sushi, there will be wonderful surprises.

In this message, ordering sushi is not central to this evening’s message but it is a metaphor of faithfulness…. In this first service of Christmas Eve services tonight, let us think about “Leaving everything up to God” or “Perfect Submission to God.” There was a person who was the best role model of perfect submission to God, the Father.

Do you know whom I am talking about? Actually, every time I read the Gospel text given today, it always reminds me of the Beatles’ great hit song “Let It Be”. The lyrics start with “When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me, Speaking words of wisdom, ‘Let it be’".

I do not know the true meaning that Paul McCartney wanted to convey with this song since I learned that his biological mother’s name was also Mary, but to me I interpret that Mother Mary is Mary, Jesus’ mother. And “Let It Be” may be interpreted “leave everything to God, the Father.” Therefore, I believe the “Let It Be” is about the Biblical Story of Mary’s perfect submission that changed the whole world.

Even though Mary was not yet married to Joseph, she heard astounding, unbelievable news that she would be pregnant. Considering the social norms of Judaism and Jewish culture, this was not permitted. For Mary, there would not only be an end to her engagement, but she could also be stoned to death.

In other words, Mary would be shunned and pushed to the depths of darkness. However, God spoke again to Mary through the Angel: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Then, Mary replied and confessed, “I am a servant of the Lord, let it be, according to God’s will. I leave everything to God” …. Do you think that this situation is something similar to a famous scene that we know from the life stories in the Bible? Elizabeth, who would be the mother of John the Baptist, was also left everything to God.

However, I would say Elizabeth did not experience the possibility of death, like Mary could experience. So what is a similar story to what Mary was experiencing? How about the situation when Jesus would be crucified?

To me, Mary’s response to God’s angel signified what Jesus prayed at the Mount Olive before he was crucified. He prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me,” at first. Then he followed the prayer saying that “yet, not my will but yours be done.” This was Jesus perfect submission to the Father.

Praying that your will be done is a very important prayer and is a part of the Lord’s Prayer. As you remember, we pray that “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

The day before yesterday, it was the longest night of the year. In the northern hemisphere, Christmas season always comes around the time we experience the longest night. Today, when we enter into darkness during the time of the year we experience the longest night, God is reminding us what Mary prayed, “your will be done,” the perfect submission.

Last Sunday, I talked about the heated disagreement about where the capital of Israel is located. After Sunday, I feel that the disagreement has become even more heated. The darkness among nations is ever increasing.

This evening, before it becomes completely dark tonight, we reflect upon the story in which Mary submitted herself perfectly and left everything up to God. God is reminding us and guiding us to pray that God’s will be done through the stories of Mary and Jesus. Mary’s perfect submission to the Father guided her to sing the Magnificat. Jesus’ perfect submission to the Father before the crucifixion resurrected Jesus.

After the service even if we experience the long, dark night tonight, and even if the world darkens in the coming years, may we be able to leave everything to God so that the Love of Jesus be revealed to this world and thus save all people God loves. Marry Christmas!