

Sermon for 2022 Spring Memorial

Good afternoon, everyone! Happy New Day, Week & special “Thanks” for joining today’s service. This is the annual Spring Memorial Service for 2022. And what a ***Divine Arrangement*** it is! Today is the 68th birthday of the late Rev. Mikisaburo Otsubo who passed away last month February 2nd. To honor him, I’ll be speaking about him in today’s sermon.

Since last year’s Autumn Memorial, we have had one *Newly Departed soul* connected to our church: a Mr. Jessie Paul Newton, who is Marshal Homfeld’s grandfather. He passed away September 20th. Welcoming his Mitama spirit for today’s service, I especially have asked Kami to lead his Mitama spirit to the world of peace & joy in the next world.

On February 24, 2022, *Russia* launched a large-scale *invasion* of *Ukraine*. Ukraine is strong in their cause to “defend their country.” Many Ukrainians are giving their lives for their country. That is why Ukraine has been able to hold out against “Russia without a cause,” even though there is a huge difference in military equipment. There are many casualties for both countries. It is a tragedy for the people of Ukraine and for the people of Russia. I can’t help but pray that peace will come sooner, rather than later. During this Spring Memorial service, I also prayed for the Mitama spirits of the victims in this war.

Konko Daijin has taught:

Because humans are born through the blessings of Kami, they must also die with the blessings of Kami. Therefore, if a child's birth is a happy event, then death is a much happier event since one becomes a kami.

The reason why death is so abhorred is because people have not yet developed enough peace of mind to accept death. Practice faith, so that you will be blessed with peace of mind.

There’s no knowing when one will die. It is determined by Kami. It is too late to practice faith after a crisis has already arisen. People must always have faith which will be strong enough for crucial times.

[Jinkyu Kyo Goroku 23, 1-3 / Voice of Universe 58]

Rev. Mikisaburo Otsubo, *who has recently passed away*, is a most important person for me. His death has made me realize that the depth of Kami’s thoughtfulness is far beyond human measure. By seeking sincerely for Kami’s deep wish about his death, I cannot help but realize Kami is requesting all of us to follow his steps of faith for achieving peace & joy in our heart. With all his heart he developed his faith in order to establish the Wagakokoro era in this world.

I would like to tell you of the life & death of the Rev. Mikisaburo Otsubo. Throughout his life he has done his best to pursue the Wagakokoro. He, then, created a kind of

curriculum for Wagakokoro and opened his private cram school for Wagakokoro. Every day for many years he conducted private lessons for three or four people, each lasting an hour and a half, as often as he could throughout day. He must have had more than a hundred students. It was as though he was in a rush. He hastened to talk of the importance of Wagakokoro. Although in his childhood, he didn't like to talk in public, and could never get himself to do it. I revere him so much that this news of his death gave me a shock, though I had been prepared. My tears flowed endlessly. But, at the same time, I could not help but extend my deepest appreciation to him.

He was born as the third son of Rev. Soichiro and Isoe Otsubo on March 13, 1954. His father was in the midst of four and half years of faith training (from 1950 to 1955). Rev. Otsubo accepted everything without a thought about what would happen to him. Whether Kami brought good or bad upon him, during that time his acceptance of everything was truly amazing. Then, Rev. Otsubo realized genuine faith was to respect each happening with gratitude as Kami's doing.

His son was named Mikisaburo because his grandfather received in a revelation: '*miki*, a bottle of sake.' But *miki* can also mean *THREE* (mi) *JOYS* (ki), which are 'Thankfulness (arigata-ki)' 'Preciousness (mottaina-ki)' and 'Awesomeness (osoreoo-ki).' Kami wished him to become a person who would receive these three joys and give them to people around him. He was very shy and had a language disorder in his childhood days. He revered his father so much and sat for the first time at the Mediation seat at age 11. However, he didn't want to become a *Konko Minister*, because he didn't like to speak in public.

That was why he entered the high school of architecture. Soon after, his right jaw was swollen and became bigger & bigger & stiff. It became as if he were an old man with *edema* in the Japanese folk tale. It was left alone for a year and a half. His life was dark at ages 15, 16 & 17 as in the lyrics in one of the Japanese popular songs.

One day his homeroom teacher said to him, "Your religion is one that refuses to go to the hospital." With determined heart he went to the Mediation seat to ask his father what he should do. His father's reply was, "What a treasure you have! You can deepen your faith due to this illness." With mixed emotions he left the worship hall and cried his heart out.

Then he started to attend the morning prayer service. Rev. Otsubo told him, "*This is training. It's not what you desire, but what Kami is requesting of you. It is important to make a decision to accept it.*" Once he determined to do so, Kami's work became remarkable.

Soon there was a health examination for his school excursion. He would not be allowed to join the excursion due to his swollen jaw. At that time Rev. Otsubo & his wife had planned to attend the memorial service at Konko Hombu. So, Rev. Otsubo asked him to go

come to Hombu with them. Rev. Otsubo thought this might be the last trip for a parent-child trip together.

Just after they came back from the trip, a doctor specializing in otolaryngology (ear & throat) visited the church. He asked Mikisaburo Sensei to open his mouth and then his complexion drastically changed. It was as if he just received a death sentence and caused him to cry. The doctor asked Rev. Otsubo to please let him be hospitalized immediately for surgery at Kurume Medical College.

At that time Rev. Otsubo told his son:

The reality of humanity is that there is life today and no life tomorrow. It's like you are standing on a precipice right now, and if you take one step forward, you are doomed to fall. But at that point, if you turn around, a world of endless blessings will open for you.

And added, *to do that, it is good for you to wish to be of service for Kami's Wish that human beings may be fulfilled.*

The doctor had said, “Even with surgery it’s 99% *im*possible to be cured.” When Rev. Otsubo heard this, he said, “Now it is my turn.” The doctor also wanted to see the face of the parents who had let this illness worsen for such a long time. However, when he operated, the doctor was utterly surprised to find that the bad tumors had all gathered and were wrapped together. Therefore, they could be taken out in one fell swoop.

After the successful surgery Rev. Otsubo and Mikisaburo Sensei went to their parent church to extend their appreciation to Kami. It was there that Rev. Otsubo received this revelation from Kami.

Ripe persimmons are falling down. Among all of them, only one has not fallen, and remains. When looking closely, one could see it was supported by a twist of Kami 's paper.

Explaining this revelation to his son, Rev. Otsubo told him:

If you forget Kami's blessings, you will lose your life, just as this persimmon would fall without the support of Kami's paper.

Rev. Otsubo asked Mikisaburo to join his morning prayer for a week by sitting with him from 3:30 am. He was young, but accepted the offer, since it would only be for a week. After a week Rev. Otsubo said nothing to him about this matter. Mikisaburo was so shy that he couldn't say anything; he couldn't ask if he could stop. Ever since then, he has come for morning prayer services throughout his whole life.

One day Rev. Otsubo said to him,

You will realize that it shall be great to continue through this morning prayer service for 30 years. It is then you will feel you're allowed to have the power of faith & divine virtue.

He actually received such divine power & divine virtue that anyone could not help but admire his charming divine grace.

Mikisaburo Sensei sincerely has pursued Wagakokoro with all his heart since he started to join the morning prayer service. Then he came to realize the ultimate value of Wagakokoro. Manifesting Kami's glory of Wagakokoro, he started to advocate the importance of climbing the mountain of Wagakokoro. Everywhere & at any time he would talk about Wagakokoro --- such as 'What Wagakokoro is,' 'The necessity of Wagakokoro' and 'How to develop Wagakokoro.'

As I said before, he opened his private cram school for Wagakokoro at KC Airaku. He started group by reciting the Divine reminder. Then, he & his students would recite these words together: "***Let us learn the Way. Let us step onto its road. Let us tell people this Way.***"

He has done his best to follow this Way. It is not too much to say that his life has been wrapped in the heart of Wagakokoro. His last words were: "***I earnestly wish to be of service to Kami. However, without being allowed, I cannot do so.***" With such enthusiasm like his, let us manifest Wagakokoro and serve Kami, in order for Kami's wish to establish the Wagakokoro era in this world would be fulfilled.