



Dialogue
Creating the Next 60 Years

Project Report

June 2, 2015

Founders' Day Chapel Hour: The 60th Anniversary



60th Anniversary Project
INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY



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AY2015 60th Anniversary Chapel Service and Lecture (Dr. John C. Knapp)

This year's 60th Anniversary Chapel Service was conducted by Dr. John C. Knapp, the twelfth president of Hope College in Michigan, USA. Hope College and ICU are members of Global Liberal Arts Alliance, which aims to promote liberal arts education across national borders. In addition, both are private liberal arts colleges and uphold the principles of small class education and Christianity. The occasion of Dr. Knapp's visit was taken to further deepen the relationship between the two institutions.

Dr. Knapp's sermon title was "Serving God in Every Place".

During the service, Dr. Knapp read aloud 1 Corinthians 7.17, 23-24 and lucidly explained to the attendees the importance of daily doing one's best wherever one is placed. In the lecture that followed after the service in the International Conference Room of the Kiyoshi Togasaki Memorial Dialogue House, entitled "Value of liberal arts education in the 21st century" and directed towards students, faculty, staff, and those affiliated with ICU, President Knapp addressed that liberal arts education cultivates abilities sought by society. For the resolution of problems in an increasingly complex world, it is important to examine matters from various fields and viewpoints and fearlessly continue asking questions if there is even a bit of doubt. By so doing, the ability to think critically is cultivated. Furthermore, the ability to apply one's knowledge, the ability to make ethically and morally sound judgments, and the ability to make decisions by understanding matters from various standpoints and finding a middle ground are cultivated. This is liberal arts education, and these abilities should be acquired by those who will become true leaders.



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After the address, current students, faculty, staff, and alumni asked many questions. During this time, the parable of the sequoia tree captured the listeners' attention. Sequoia trees grow to heights of 90 meters or more and appear to reach for the heavens on their own, with nary a glance at their surroundings. In reality, however, they do not grow to become such gigantic trees on their own. The roots of a sequoia tree intertwine with those of nearby sequoia trees, and the trees grow while supporting each other. Because of this, they grow to heights not seen in other trees. Looking at the two sequoias by the main entrance to ICU Library, which delight viewers with their appearances marking the four seasons, those who heard today's address no doubt deeply felt the coexistence of ICU and Hope College in the coming world.

Also, observing students quietly spending time as they pleased on the lawns of ICU campus, President Knapp said: "It is very important for all campuses to have places where one can quietly spend time. Such times and places enable students to reflect on themselves, to analyze, to not fear to be alone, and to continue to learn afresh the importance of relationships with others. Students having such times and places is an extremely important element for liberal arts education, and I was deeply moved by ICU having this." This comment was deeply related to his remark at the beginning of his address that one of the characteristics of liberal arts education is the attitude of lifelong learning.

The afternoon hour on the campus, with the rainy season in sight, was a valuable opportunity for reexamining the value of a liberal arts education.

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Founders' Day Chapel Hour: The 60th Anniversary
Tuesday, June 2, 2015, 1:15 p.m. University Chapel

Presider Rev. Shoko Kitanaka
Hymn No. 148 "True-Hearted, Whole-Hearted"
Scripture Reading 1 Corinthians 7:17 and 23-24 Rev. Paul Johnson
Message Serving God in Every Place Dr. John C. Knapp
President, Hope College

International Christian University Chapel Service

Dr. John C. Knapp
President, Hope College
Sermon Title: Serving God in Every Place

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:17 and 23-24

17 Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. . . . 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. 24 Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

In his first letter to the Christians in Corinth, Paul offers this advice: Serve God wherever you are at the time you become a follower of Jesus Christ. Don't quit your job or assume that God wants you to go to a faraway mission field. Ask how God can use you here and now.

A much earlier story in the Bible illustrates this point quite well. It is the story of a powerful man who comes to know God in a surprising way, only to realize that the duties of his executive position seem difficult to reconcile with the will of God. We find the story in 2 Kings 5:1-19.

Naaman is the commanding general of the army of Syria, a kingdom perpetually at war with Israel. He also suffers from leprosy, a frightful illness for which there is no cure.

In the unlikeliest of scenarios, a servant girl tells him of a prophet in Israel, who may be able to cleanse him of the disease. Desperate enough to try anything, he asks his king for permission to travel to Israel for help. The Syrian monarch obliges and sends a letter to the king of Israel, asking him to receive Naaman and cure his leprosy.

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As you might imagine, the Israelite king is stunned by the request to cure an incurable disease and initially takes it for some kind of enemy trick. He eventually agrees and allows Naaman and his royal entourage to seek help from the prophet Elisha. The prophet declines to meet the visitors but sends a messenger to tell Naaman to wash in the Jordan River seven times “and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.”

Naaman questions the idea that river water can cure anything, for he had expected the prophet to dramatically wave his hand over the leprosy in the fashion of a magician. But his friends convince him to go into the river, and he is completely cured. In one of Scripture’s most dramatic moments of conversion, Naaman gives credit to the living God and exclaims: “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel.”

In fact, he is so sure that God lives only in one land that he gathers two mule-loads of Israel’s soil to take back to Syria to build a personal altar for worship. It is at this moment that Naaman realizes that his job back home will require him to kneel beside the king of Syria at the altar of the pagan idol Rimmon. He knows that this will be blasphemous and scandalous for a follower of the one true God. Even with his personal altar to Yahweh, he will appear to be participating in the worship of a false god. Won’t his public actions in the workplace conflict with his personal faith?



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Naaman is tormented by this inner conflict even before leaving Elisha's home. He does not ponder quitting his job or defecting to Israel's army, but instead seeks God's forgiveness for the sin he fears he will commit when carrying out his duties. In a sense, his decision is consistent with Paul's advice to new converts to stay in their current situations.

Naaman shares his worries with Elisha in hopes that the prophet will mediate on his behalf for divine forgiveness. Elisha's response is as astonishing as it is simple: "Go in peace." Brimming with God's grace, these three words are all Elisha has to say. He lets Naaman make his own decision

and grants him peace. He pronounces God's blessing with the assurance that it is possible for Naaman to be faithful and useful to God in his workplace.

We know nothing of Naaman's life after this dramatic conversion, though subsequent texts reveal that the two nations remained at war, presumably with Naaman as the Syrian general in chief. Still, we must imagine that he remained in the king's court for some good purpose. It is plausible that he went on to serve God in the Syrian palace, just as Joseph became premier of Egypt for a pharaoh, and Daniel rose to be a trusted adviser to Babylonian kings.

Is it any less likely that God wishes to use you and me in government offices, as well as in corporations, law firms, and factories? To be sure, Christians should be unwilling to participate in some activities or even to hold certain jobs, but leaving a situation must always be weighed against the potential of staying in place to serve God and benefit others.

In the United States, and perhaps here as well, students sometimes imagine that God's most valued servants are the people who work in full-time ministry. This is understandable, as it is easy to see how pastors and missionaries are doing important work for God's kingdom. Our students also find it easy to see how God's will may be done through the helping professions - by physicians, nurses, school teachers, social workers. After all, Jesus was devoted to caring for the sick and needy.

But what about those of you who choose to work as engineers, investment managers, government employees or hotel managers? Can you be of much use to God? The short answer is that I believe Jesus Christ is the savior of the whole world because God loves all of creation.

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So how might God use you in your future occupations? A text familiar to many Christians is found in the sixth chapter of the book of Micah. This occurs in a poetic drama where the nation of Israel is on trial. At just this point in the story, the prophet Micah proclaims,

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

It is noteworthy that the Hebrew word for mortal refers to all of humankind - including the people of Japan and America - and not to Israel alone.

The prophet emphasizes that the humble enjoy God’s companionship, but the prideful walk alone. Pride blinds us to the failures for which we need repentance. As we are reminded in 1 John, we deceive ourselves when we forget how completely we depend upon God’s grace in Jesus Christ.

But what is most important about this text is that it summarizes the good that God requires of us. Certainly a person can do justice and love kindness in any occupation and in every relationship. God wants to use us as instruments of love and goodness in the world.

None of you may face a situation anything like Naaman’s, but it is my prayer that each of you will respond to God’s call to be salt and light in this world, to be people who are just and kind and humble. Depending on your interests and gifts, you may serve God as a chemist or a musician, as a businessperson or an educator, or maybe as a psychologist or diplomat. With Paul, I pray that you will “live as a believer in whatever situation” you find yourself. The world will be better because of it.

Thank you for this opportunity to visit International Christian University. We at Hope College are honored to work in partnership with your faculty in providing the best possible education for future leaders of our global society.