

“What would it profit a man to gain the whole world, but to lose his own soul?” —Mark 8:36

Welcome to Kanto Gakuin University! This is the beginning of a new school year for all of us, but, not only that—it’s the beginning in a new stage of life for many of you. It’s my hope and prayer that you’ll truly appreciate and take advantage of the opportunities you’ll have for friendship, and study, and growth during these next few years.

My name is Dwight Davidson, and I’m a missionary serving at Kanto Gakuin and I’m the chaplain here at the College of Humanities. As all of you know, Kanto Gakuin has a rich Christian history. Even today, there are a number of Christian activities on campus. For example, if you’re interested in being part of a discussion group or a volunteer group or a choir, please feel free to contact me at any time, or to contact the staff of the Christian Education Center.

One of the very regular Christian activities on campus is *worship*. Once a week, at each of the campuses of KGU, there is a worship time from 12:20-12:40. At the Kamariya campus, we don’t have a chapel building, but a worship service is held every Tuesday in room 302 of the number 1 building. I hope you’ll come as often as you can.

But first of all, today, I want to answer a very basic question—“What is Christian worship?” This may be the first time many of you have been to a Christian worship service. That’s okay—please don’t feel awkward about that.

Simply put, worship means, “spending time with God.” It means giving something to God and receiving something back. It means communicating with God. But please remember that when Christians talk about “God,” we’re not referring to a person-like creature “living somewhere else.” Modern Christians don’t imagine God to be something like a giant living up in the clouds, separate from this world (even though that sort of “God” character still sometimes makes appearances in American TV shows or movies!).

Rather, when Christians talk about God, we’re talking about that life-giving power that is all around us. God is not “a being” like a dog or a human or even a “ghost.” God is the *source* of being itself. God is the “More” in the universe which pulls everything towards completion—towards perfection. And you and I—we are an important *part* of the universe.

Christians affirm that God *wants* to communicate with us. God, we believe, is the Loving Power that is calling us—the whole world, and you and I—towards completion, towards true wholeness in life.

So when we come together to “worship,” we spend time *recognizing* this power we call “God” and we spend

time *thinking about* what God is asking of us. Obviously this requires some openness and a sense of poetry about life.

So, right now, we're "worshipping" if we recognize that God is here. The "source of being itself" is here in us and among us. Do you know that? "Worship" is a way of understanding the world.

What does this God want from us? What does this God who wants to complete the world want from *you* and *me*? In order for *this world* to become whole, what does *your* life need to become? What does *mine* need to become? In order for you to become healthy and whole, *what kind of person* do you need to become? What are the things that are keeping you from being healthy and whole?

These are deep questions, aren't they: What *is* your life? Where is its worth?

2000 years ago, Jesus put the question this way: "What would it profit a man to gain the whole world, but to lose his own soul?" Jesus was not just talking about our physical life—he was talking about our inner or spiritual life. What good is the person who has lots of money and power—whose life is full of temporary pleasures—but who has never asked the most important questions: questions like, "What will my life mean? How will I be remembered? What good is my life *to others* or *to the world* or *to God*? How is my life helping to *complete* the world?"

These are the questions we ask when we spend time with God—when we "worship." *They are the most important questions of life.* So I encourage you to continue this "conversation with God" during your years here at Kanto Gakuin.

Each of you has a wonderful and exciting college life ahead of you. These next few years will be a fascinating time—a time when you'll make decisions that will shape your future. You'll learn many new things, write many reports and take many tests! You'll make new friends! You'll have unforgettable experiences.

But I want you to remember this—*never lose your life.* Don't forget about your inner life. Don't forget the most important questions. In fact, think about them over and over again, until you're sure you know the answers. We believe that God is with us, and God will guide us to those answers, *if we listen.*

Let's pray,

God in this place,

You have given each of us the wonderful gift of life. Thank you.

Help us not to misuse this gift, but to use it for the good of all created things.

**Sermon Title: First Things First**

**Mark 8:36**

Bless each one of us here today—each student and teacher and staff person—

Help us to learn to walk *with* you—to listen to you,

Give us *strength* for the journey,

And may our journeys be full of *joy*.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen.