JESUS' TEACHING AND HEALING

Mark 1:21-45

Key Verse: 1:41

"Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touch­ed the man. 'I am will­ing,' he said. 'Be clean!'"

As the Messiah of the world, Jesus had to do many things. But at the beginning of his earthly messianic minis­try, Jesus did mainly two things. First, he taught the word of God; second, he healed the sick. To­day Jesus teaches God's word at the syna­gogue. People were amazed at the power and au­thor­ity of his word. Jesus started his earthly messianic ministry by teaching the word of God.

I. Jesus' teaching (21-28)

**First,** Jesus' word has power in it (21-22). After John's baptism and God's ordination of Jesus as the Messiah (1:9-11), Jesus returned from the re­gion of the Jor­dan River to Capernaum (21a). There he started his messi­anic minis­try. What did Jesus do at the initial stage of his mes­sian­ic work? Verse 21b says, "...Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach." Jesus began his messianic work by teaching the word of God in the syn­agogue. Wherev­er there were as many as ten Jewish families, there was a synagogue. Wherever they went, they built a synagogue as the center of their lives of faith. In world history, power­ful coun­tries had pulverized the nation Israel time and again, but not her peo­ple, because their com­muni­ty was like a nucle­us, making their synagogue like a cen­tripetal force. Be­cause of this nucle­us, the more they were perse­cuted, the stron­ger their spirits grew. This peo­ple overcame all kinds of adverse situa­tions and be­came a great na­tion in history. Their syna­gogue was primari­ly a Bible house and a prayer house. In the syna­gogue, the Bible was taught not by the profes­sional but mostly by the laymen.

On a Sabbath, Jesus went into a synagogue and began to teach the word of God. When Jesus began to teach the word, people were amazed at his teaching. The author Mark says that people were amazed because his word had power and authority. Why did his word have power and author­ity? It was because Jesus had abso­lute faith in God's word that God's word has the power to change anybody who comes to him. To Jesus, the word was his unique and potent weap­on. When Jesus battled Satan in the desert, fasting 40 days, Satan tempt­ed him with three essen­tial things all human beings need or aspire to: First, bread to sus­tain his life; sec­ond, the shortcut to glory and suc­cess; third, the easygoing way to fulfill his earthly messianic ministry. Each time, Jesus defeated the devil's temptation with the word of God (Dt 8:3; 6:16; 6:13).

When Jesus saw people, they looked like they needed economic and political help, as well as public aid. Bible study looked too high for their situations. They were down­trodden. They looked too bro­ken to be healed. But Jesus taught the word of God to them because Je­sus had faith that the word has transforming power in it. Jesus' faith in the word of God has changed the world to be a livable place. "For the word of God is living and active...it judges the thoughts and atti­tudes of the heart" (Heb 4:12). Je­sus taught the word of God to people who looked like the living dead because he believed that the word of God gives eter­nal life to thirsty souls (Jn 5:24). The word of God is able to make man wise for salvation (2Ti 3:15). The word of God en­lightens man's heart to know the truth--where he came from and where he is go­ing (Jn 14:6). The world needs a change. But we cannot expect a change from the poli­ti­cians or journal­ists. The change of the world comes from us when we be­lieve that the word of God is living.

How did the people re­spond to his teach­ing? Look at verse 22. "The peo­ple were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had author­ity, not as the teachers of the law." The teachers of the law deliv­ered their messages pre­pared with metic­ulous care from the Torah, not to save men's souls. Their messages did not move peo­ple's hearts at all. Yet when Jesus deliv­ered his mes­sage, the people were amazed by his authority and fresh­ness. Some said, "A new teach­ing--and with au­thori­ty" (27a). Jesus' word had a heart-moving power. Jesus' mes­sage was heard as a com­pletely new teaching, even though his mes­sage was but the old, old story; still in it, the life of God was flow­ing.

There are many people who have no word of God. As a result, they become harebrained. That's true. The word of God is the fountain of ev­erything because God made the world with the word of his mouth. There­fore, the word of God made man and the world absolute. These days ev­erything is rela­tivistic. Those who are used to the rela­tivis­tic way of life gradually be­come depression patients. What they say is, "Maybe," or "May­be not." A relativistic way of thinking makes men unsure about ev­ery­thing. Noth­ing gives them abso­lute meaning of life. We are in­spired by Jesus, who taught the word of God at the begin­ning of his messianic work to everyone who came to him. From Jesus we learn that we must teach God's word to many peo­ple in this elusive world, hoping that they may have the word of life in their hearts.

Undoubtedly Jesus' opening message to the world was, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (1:15). His message focused on the good news of the king­dom of God. It is be­cause Jesus came to restore the kingdom of God, which was lost because of one man Adam's disobedience. Jesus gave them the message of the kingdom of God so that he might bring them back to the kingdom of God. One young man said, "My minister always talks about the king­dom of God. Maybe he is sentimen­tal about his old age." But we must know why Jesus taught the mes­sage of the king­dom of God at the beginning of his messianic ministry.

**Second,** Jesus' word has power to drive out demons (23-25). There was a man in the syna­gogue who was possessed by an evil spirit. Look at verse 24. As soon as he heard Jesus' teaching, he cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to de­stroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God!" It is a big surprise. The evil spirit knew the existence of Jesus so well. On the other hand, modern people want to ignore the existence of the evil spirit. In this case, the evil spirit is syn­ony­mous with innumerable de­mons. This is the reason the evil spirit said, "Have you come to destroy 'us'?" instead of saying, "Have you come to destroy 'me'?" The evil spirit made the man suffer from the power of sin and death. The evil spirit made him utterly de­spair. Generally, the evil spirit makes most Americans lazy. The evil spirit makes most Ameri­cans think that money and pleasure-seeking are every­thing. The evil spirit deprives most Americans of a sense of honor. The evil spirit makes many Ameri­cans waste money on drugs and then have hangovers. The evil spir­it is the cause of all troubles and crimes. A mur­der is com­mitted in the U.S. every 24 minutes, and every 7 min­utes a woman is raped, said Time magazine. The evil spirit is not afraid of a nuclear bomb. But he is really afraid of Jesus. Look at verse 25. "'Be qui­et!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!'" At this, the evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek (26). Jesus' word had pow­er to drive out the evil spirit. The people were all so amazed that they said to each other, "Wow! What is this? A new teach­ing--and with authori­ty! He even gives orders to evil spir­its, and they obey him" (27). Until now, they were under the power of the evil spirit. But Jesus drove out the evil spirit with one word. We must believe that the word of God has pow­er to drive out evil spirits from men's hearts. When we believe this, we can help oth­ers.

II. Jesus' healing (29-45)

**First,** Jesus heals many (29-34). Look at verse 29. "As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and An­drew." Jesus' young dis­ciples must have been hungry after the meeting at the synagogue. They had to go somewhere to fill their empty stomachs. But they had no place to go. Finally they went to Peter's, where his mother-in-law was sick. Maybe she despaired be­cause of her son-in-law. She probably wished that Peter would become one of the yuppies. But Peter suddenly became a fanatic of Jesus the Nazarene. Anyway, the disci­ples had to go somewhere to eat lunch. Jesus took them to Peter's moth­er-in-law's. Jesus took her by the hand and healed her. She began to wait on them. Jesus was very busy. But he had time to care about one old and sick woman.

As soon as the sun had set and the stars were out, the heat of the day was forgotten. It was the most proper time for the people to see Je­sus. On the other hand, Jesus had worked hard all day long for the needy and he needed a short while to rest. But the whole town gathered at the door of the house where Jesus was staying. They came with various dis­eases, and many were possessed by demons. They were groaning and moaning with their sin­sicknesses and demon-pos­sessions. Though they were a crowd of people, Jesus wel­comed them, as a father wel­comes his children one by one. Jesus cared for them "one by one" until all of them were taken care of. Jesus is the true shepherd of all mankind. Jesus came to this world to heal the sick and bind up the wounded and anoint the bro­ken-hearted. Jesus came to this world to heal sinsick souls.

**Second,** Jesus prays (35-39). When we think about one day in the life of Jesus, it is truly amazing. Yesterday, Jesus taught people in the syna­gogue. He visited and healed Si­mon's mother-in-law. In the eve­ning he healed the crowd of sick people. He spent all day long for the sick and needy. Jesus also spent bits and pieces of time with his disci­ples. Virtu­ally, Je­sus had no personal time. But he had time. Look at verse 35. "Very early in the morn­ing, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a soli­tary place, where he prayed." The life of Jesus was truly "holy" and "glorious." Through prayer, Jesus listened to God. Through prayer, Jesus renewed his decision to obey God. Through prayer, Jesus renewed his spiritual strength to shepherd the flock of God.

I learn two things from Jesus' early morning prayer. First, Jesus prayed to God regularly. There are many kinds of jobs. Among them, shep­herding the flock of God might be the hardest one. In order to shepherd no one can eat regular meals or have a regular night of sleep. Many shep­herds want to have good sheep who study the Bible regularly and live a life of faith against the trends of the world. But there are no such sheep. Sheep usually demand a lot. Sheep are usual­ly rebellious and lazy. Sheep are sheep. Sheep cannot be shepherds all of a sudden.

What should the shepherds of God's flock do when they are only bur­dened? They who are called the shepherds of God's flock must come to God and pray on a regular basis. God's servants must listen to God's voice and obey his word as a matter of life and death. It is not necessary for God's servants to be swayed by the voice of the world. God's servants must have a vine and branch relationship with God through prayer.

Second, in this prayer we learn that Jesus had a clear prayer topic. Jesus' prayer topic was to fulfill God's will for world salvation. Jesus prayed with this one prayer topic. God's servants must have a clear prayer topic given by God. When I was in Korea from 1960-1976 I had a prayer topic for Korean students. It was that Korea may over­come fatalism and have world mission vision.

In 1976 Korean UBF leaders wanted me to go to a mission field or disappear from Korea. They said this because they could not be top lead­ers as long as I was there as their shepherd. So I came to Chica­go. But I had no prayer topic for American students. I only suffered from cultural shock. I only suffered from the continuous attack of anti-Christian movements. They attacked me, saying that discipleship train­ing is a hu­man rights violation. Many parents attacked me, saying that I changed their chil­dren from a money-oriented lifestyle to the pure and poor lifestyle of Jesus. After 12 years I had to decide to remain here to work or to go to anoth­er mission field. One night God gave me 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a cho­sen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of dark­ness into his wonderful light." When I reviewed American history, America is a chosen people. The gospel came to Israel, and next, to Rome and England. Now the gospel has come to America. The First Awakening and the Second Awakening show that America was cho­sen by God to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Since then I began to pray that God may establish Ame­rica as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. This prayer topic has enabled me to be com­passion­ate with many American students. This prayer topic has en­abled me to participate in the remaining suffering of Jesus with full devotion. I believe that God intends to establish America as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Jesus' preaching and healing ministry was very suc­cess­ful. But his disciples were still world­ly. Look at verses 36,37. Simon Peter and his com­panions came to Jesus while he was praying in a lonely place and said, "Everyone is looking for you!" Peter was excited that Jesus' populari­ty was soaring up high in the sky. So he went to Jesus to report to him, ex­pecting that Jesus would say, "Oh yeah?" What was Jesus' reply? Look at verse 38. "Let us go somewhere else--to the near­by villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." Jesus knew Simon's feel­ings. But Jesus clearly teach­es Si­mon why he came to this world. It was to preach the word, not to be a successful business­man. For this, Jesus suf­fered endlessly to keep up with teach­ing the Bible to those who came to him. Jesus never gave up his pur­pose of life.

**Third,** Jesus heals a man with leprosy (40-45). Jesus' labor to teach the word, heal the sick and cast out demons all day long was more than enough. Jesus had to rest some. But there was a man who could not appear in public. He waited all day long until all people had disap­peared. When everybody was gone, a hideous man appeared before Jesus. He was a man with leprosy. Look at verse 40. "A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.'" In ancient times, a leper was re­garded as a cursed man. The land of Palestine was hot and humid, and lepro­sy was contagious and incur­able. So, anyone who was discovered to be a leper was ban­ished by law from the fellow­ship of men, and lived in a no-man's land. Man is called a social animal who wants to live among men. But this man with leprosy was an outcast. No doubt, he wanted to mingle with others, but he could not. There is a po­em about a leper's loneliness: "The rain beats down on the roadside inn. People go into the inn one by one. I know I must get into the inn. I know how to get a drink there. But I cannot go into the inn because I am a man with leprosy. A man with leprosy is stand­ing on the roadside alone in the heavy rain." To Jew­ish people, the mat­ter of un­clean­ness was very seri­ous. But this man with leprosy was branded as "un­clean." They say that lepers wore black gar­ments to be conspicu­ous to nor­mal peo­ple. They had to walk with their upper lips cov­ered and cry out, "Un­clean!" This man had to live all his life in this way, until his body was rotting away. Perhaps his eyes were staring, barely supported by the sockets of emaci­ated eyes. His out­ward appear­ance discouraged him from coming to Jesus. Also, the Jewish law for­bade him to approach others (Lev 13:46). As he passed by on a street, children threw rocks at him, and groups of wom­en ran away as soon as they no­ticed that he was a leper. He must have been deeply with­drawn into him­self.

But he came to Jesus. Look at verse 40. "A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.'" Though he was a man with leprosy, he had faith in Jesus. He had faith to reveal him­self as a leper to the Messiah. He had faith to ask the Messiah's mercy. He believed that Jesus could heal his lep­rosy. The strength of faith enabled him to overcome his feelings as a leper and come to Je­sus. There is no human limitation in the world of faith.

When we study this part, we come to know why God made his one and only Son a ransom sacrifice. God is holy. So God had to punish sinful humankind. But in his great compassion, God sent his one and only Son as a ransom sacrifice. Thus God satisfied his righteousness. Thus God added his compassion to the law of God. Sometimes we see that some sheep want to remain as everlasting sheep. They are selfish and unthankful. But we learn from Jesus who said to the man with lepro­sy, "I am willing", that we must not see our sheep with legalistic eyes but with the compassion of Jesus.

What did Jesus do for a man with leprosy? Look at verse 41. "Filled with compas­sion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!'" At that time nobody was will­ing to touch a man with leprosy. But Jesus was filled with compassion when he saw this man with leprosy. This was not hu­man com­passion; it was the com­passion of the Messi­ah. Jesus touched this man with lep­rosy and said, "I am willing. Be clean!" This event shows us that Jesus is our compassion­ate Messiah. What hap­pened when Jesus said, "Be clean"? Look at verse 42. "Im­me­di­ately the leprosy left him and he was cured." When Jesus was ex­tremely tired he did not say, "I am tired." Jesus said, "I am willing." Then the leprosy left the man and he be­came as wholesome as others. He was no more a man with lep­rosy. He became a new man in Jesus (2Co 5:17). Jesus also wanted to restore this man's social status. So he told him to go to the priest and get a certif­icate of healing by offering a sacri­fice. In this way, Jesus served a man with leprosy. Praise his name! Praise his compassion! May his compassion be our very own.

Let's pray that God may give us faith to believe that the word of God has power to heal the sick and give eternal life to those who come to him. May God grant us the compassion of Jesus.