

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. There-

fore, 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-possession. 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.