

JESUS LAID HIS HAND ON EACH ONE

Luke 4:31-44

Key Verse: 4:40

"When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them."

In this passage, we learn how much Jesus wanted to teach the word of God, because the word of God gives eternal life and the word of God gives the hope in the kingdom of God. But it was not easy for Jesus to teach the word of God to the people because they wanted something else other than the word of God. At the initial stage of his messianic ministry, teaching the word of God was not easy, because people demanded healing. But we learn how Jesus wanted to teach the word of God to the people as his first priority. In this short passage, we learn of Jesus that he cares for many people one by one.

First, Jesus' teaching the word was hindered by a demon (4:31-37).

Look at verse 31. "Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people." This verse tells us that on the Sabbath, Jesus taught the word of God to the people. Jesus' main point of his messianic ministry was teaching the word of God to the people, because the word of God makes people wise to obtain salvation from their sins and escape from eternal condemnation (2Ti 3:15). Jesus wanted to teach the word of God so that they might come to know God. Jesus wanted to teach the word of God so that they might come to know the truth. Jesus wanted to teach them his word so that they might come to know Jesus is the Son of God who gives them eternal life.

How did people respond when Jesus taught the word of God in Capernaum, a town in Galilee? The thirsty souls, who were living in the hard world, experienced drinking the living water (Jn 4:14). When they heard his word, they did not know what kind of joy it was. Anyway, they were overwhelmed by mysterious joy. All of them stood up and shouted, "Jesus, Jesus..." in amazement at his word. Look at verse 32. "They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority." When Jesus spoke his message with absolute faith, many believed the word. This scene reminds us of John 6:35, which says, "Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.'"

People who received the word were being revived like beautiful flowers. They didn't know why they were happy. But they knew one thing, that the message of Jesus had authority. Here, "authority" does not refer to that of a policeman stopping a car to give a man a ticket. Here, "authority" means the power of God which could move sinners' hearts. His message had authority, because it revealed God's mercy and his great purpose for all men (4:18-19). At the moment they heard the message of Jesus, they felt free, as free as an eagle flying in the sky over many huge mountain peaks. The message of Jesus gave them true freedom and a new life.

Where there was a work of God, there was a work of a demon. In the synagogue, there was a man who was possessed by a demon, an evil spirit (33). A demon is called an evil spirit. An evil spirit is Satan's agent. In the past, people thought the world was polluted by demons or evil spirits so that there was no more place people could dwell. Greece was the origin of Hellenism. The Greeks developed their ideology upon the humanistic point of view. They were atheists. Therefore, they should not have recognized the existence of spirits of any kind. But Greece was a nation of idol worshippers. When Paul went there, he found so many nameless idols (Ac 17:23) and so many dirty mythological stories.

Japan resembles Greece in many ways. They say that there are 800,000 family idols in Japan. People have money. But they are under the torment of the demon. Modern people think that there is no such thing as a demon or an evil spirit or Satan. Modern people ignore demons because they want to think about everything from a scientific point of view. But in fact, they are afraid, thinking about spiritual reality. But as we see in this passage, the demon's presence is clearly seen and the demon bothered Jesus' ministry of teaching the word of God. To our surprise, there are many people who identify themselves as demon worshippers. However, there are few who identify themselves as Christians.

The demon was very unhappy when people were reviving their spirits and were about to sing a song of praises to God after hearing the word of God. This part reveals the characteristics of the demon. The demon knows God very well. He knew that Jesus is the Holy One of God. The demon also knew that Jesus made him helpless by taking over all his prisoners. So the demon turned out to be a general without a soldier. Moreover, the demon knew that Jesus was in control of everything. Lastly, the demon felt that he would be destroyed by Jesus. So the demon cried out. Look at verse 34. "Ha! 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!" The demon felt Jesus, the Holy One of God, could destroy him.

What did Jesus do with the demons who hindered his delivering the word of life? Look at verse 35a. "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" The demon could not but obey the Messiah's command. But the demon was cross-tempered. When the demon came out, he threw the man down before them. Nevertheless, the demon came out without injuring him (35b). Whenever we want to teach the word of God, the demon's mischief follows, as a tree is followed by its shadow.

When we think about this event, we see that Jesus was sorry that his teaching the word of God was hindered. But Jesus was happy that he cast out the demon from a man. Jesus thought that one person under the torment of the demon was more important than his ministry of teaching the word of God. This part reminds us of Luke 15:4-6: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'" Jesus cares for one lost sheep more than 99 in the pen.

Luke again talks about the people, how they responded to the authority of the word of God. Look at verses 36-37. "All the people were amazed and said to each other, 'What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!' And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area." People said Jesus' word had authority to cast out demons. Here we learn how they had been tormented by demons. Because of demons, they lost all the joy of life. When we carefully observe people, they suffer very much, mainly because of their demon possession. Those who have no love relationship with God are under the demon's rule. Those who are under the demon's rule suffer from endless conflict and struggle with others over trivial matters. But those who have a love relationship with God can have beautiful love relationships with others. Those who do not have a love relationship with God cannot have a love relationship with others, either.

According to Mark's Gospel, people said, "What is this? A new teaching--and with authority!" (Mk 1:27b). In reality, Jesus' teaching was the old, old story. But people accepted Jesus' word as a new teaching. As we know well, people like something new all the time. In order to experience something new, many people do many strange things. One man said, "I divorced my wife in order to experience a new wife." But there is nothing new in the world (Ecc 1:9-10). Only when we come to Jesus can we experience new life, new joy and a new vision.

Second, Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law (38-39).

Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon (38a). Obviously, Jesus heard the voice of his disciples' growling stomachs. Then Jesus felt it was urgent that he should feed his disciples. There was only one possible place to go--that was Simon's mother-in-law's house. But it was not easy for Jesus to go to Simon's mother-in-law's house because she was a widow and poor. And she was too sick to ask help from. Probably, Simon's mother-in-law had contracted malaria. Probably, she was sorry that her son-in-law Simon, a veteran fisherman, suddenly gave up his fishing job and began to follow Jesus of Nazareth to catch men. She thought he should catch fish instead of catching men. When Jesus arrived at Simon's mother-in-law's house, the old grandma had a high fever, sweating and groaning. Nobody knew her sorrow and agony of life. There is a saying which goes, "Only a widow understands a widow's heart." This saying tells us that nobody cared for Simon's mother-in-law and nobody understood Simon's mother-in-law. The situation was desperate. Jesus was not swayed by the situation. Jesus bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her (39a). She accepted Jesus as the one who was more than a man.

Jesus was not only compassionate with his hungry disciples. Jesus was very compassionate with a widow suffering from a high fever. This scene reminds us of James 1:27a. It says, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress..." In the old Jewish society, widows had no chance to remarry. So widows were regarded as the most sorrowful. Jesus comforted Peter's mother-in-law and

made her happy to the degree that she voluntarily served Jesus and his disciples. Jesus is the God of comfort. In this part, we learn from Jesus that Jesus cared for one sorrowful widow until she was willing to serve Jesus and his hungry disciples.

Third, Jesus heals many, one by one (40-41).

Look at verse 40. "When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them." This part explains that Jesus cared for people one by one, even though the crowding people were innumerable. As we know, the heat of the Middle Eastern countries is unbearable. So most people enjoy a siesta and then begin to work or do something right before the sunset. But Jesus worked all day long during the heat of the day. It was time for Jesus to call it a day. But unexpectedly, as if they had had appointments, the people brought all kinds of sick people. Among them were many demon-possessed people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" (41) Many sick people were too pitiful even to look at. To take care of one or two people even by appointment is not easy. So we are troubled when we have to help many people.

One pastor visited on Sunday to pick up his sheep. But the sheep was upset because he came without an appointment, and called the police. But let's see about Jesus. Jesus was very tired. Nevertheless, Jesus was filled with compassion and healed them one by one until no one was left. There are many people in the world. But Jesus does not see them as too many people. Jesus sees each of us as the most precious one, and he cares for each of us, one by one.

There are many examples of how Jesus helped the needy one by one. There was a woman who was subject to bleeding. She spent all the money she had on doctors. But her sickness was only getting worse. She came to Jesus to touch the back part of his clothes. And she was healed. Jesus was on the way to the house of Jairus, whose daughter would die at any moment. So at this moment, Jesus could not take care of anybody. But Jesus took care of one smelly woman anyway, being detained from going to the house of Jairus (Lk 8:43-48). Once, Jesus was passing by Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was carried out. He was the only son of his mother. When Jesus saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." Then Jesus touched the coffin. The dead man broke the cover of the coffin and began to talk. Jesus gave him back to his mother. Jesus served a widow whose heart was dead (Lk 7:11-15).

We think that there are too many people. So it is impossible to take care of people one by one. But caring for people one by one is a Biblical constant. We must take care of young students one by one until we can raise 10,000 Bible teachers. At that time, Jesus' disciples were twelve. But they had no shepherd heart. So they were only dozing and yawning and waiting for Jesus to finish healing the sick. But Jesus never finished. We are just like the disciples of Jesus. But we must learn the shepherd heart of Jesus who took care of people one by one.

Fourth, Jesus prays early in the morning (42-44).

Look at verse 42. "At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them." Jesus worked hard the previous day. The next morning Jesus got up early and went to a solitary place. Luke does not say why Jesus went to a solitary place. But Mark 1:35 says, "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." Jesus had no time to pray because of people's endless demands. But Jesus had time to pray. He woke up early in the morning and went to a solitary place and prayed to God. Through prayer, Jesus listened to God. Through prayer, Jesus renewed the power of God. Through prayer, Jesus renewed his pledge and his faithfulness to God. Most of all, through prayer, Jesus renewed his love relationship with God. Prayer is the measure of faith. When we pray, we must believe that our prayer has been answered (Mk 11:23).

While Jesus was praying, several people came to Jesus to persuade Jesus to stay in the town. Maybe they wanted to build a huge hospital so that Jesus could heal the sick without going around here and there. They did not know the purpose of Jesus' coming to this world. So Jesus said in verse 43, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." In this verse, Jesus made it crystal clear that he should go around and teach the word.

In this passage we learned of Jesus who took care of people one by one. May God grant us the shepherd heart of Jesus to do the same.