God’s Kingdom through Jesus’ teaching and healing

Key verse 1:41 “Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man,' I am willing,' he said. “Be clean!””

Jesus began gospel work by preaching, “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” As we see today, Jesus’ message was accompanied by spiritual works that brought the kingdom tangibly to Capernaum. The kingdom of God was not established there geographically; yet it was revealed spiritually. We find two great characteristics of the kingdom of God: the authority of Jesus’ word, and Jesus’ compassion on the sick and needy. The kingdom of God is real and it comes in vivid ways. Wherever Jesus is, the kingdom of God comes and grows and expands.

I. Jesus’ teaching with authority (21-28)

On Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue in Capernaum and began to teach. What was people's response to His teaching? They were amazed at his teaching. They agreed that his teaching was new with authority. What does it mean that his teaching had authority? His teaching is not mere delivery of Bible knowledge. When Jesus explained words of God, they could find a true meaning of it. His teaching revealed their sins and sinful desires. His teaching comforted their heart with a hope for the Kingdom of God. His teaching also had a power to change people. A drunkard quitted drinking. Children began to respect their parents. Husband and wife loved each other. Lazy and jobless young men worked hard and donated for underdeveloped countries. How could he have such authority in his teaching?

First, He is the Word who has been from the beginning with God. With his Word all things are made. He is the true author of the Bible who worked behind all human Bible writers such as Moses. His teaching had authority because it was his own words.

Second, He looked at the people with compassion. The teachers of the law taught to show off their biblical knowledge. Their viewpoint of Understanding Bible was very legalistic. They oppressed people by forcing them to keep strict legalistic regulations. How did God look at them? They were like sheep without a shepherd. They were groaning with their sins, other's sins and Satan's condemnation and control. God wanted to set them free from all sins and powers of death.

Third, Jesus taught them with a great hope for them. When we don't have a hope for someone, we give him or her up in our hearts. Jesus looks at us with a great hope which is beyond our current condition. He could see that someday they would recover their true image as God's children and masterpieces.

There was one man in the synagogue who responded to Jesus' teaching in a strange way. “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!” Most likely, this man had come to the synagogue before and sat through the long, boring messages of the teachers of the law without revealing his true condition. But when Jesus began to teach, he reacted strongly. In fact, it was the evil spirit who reacted. Jesus’ word exposes demons, no matter how cleverly hidden. When Jesus' words entered into the heart of this man, the demon got to see that he had to flee. Jesus said to the evil spirits. “Be quiet! Come out of him!” The evil spirits couldn't resist Jesus' command even one second and left him. Look at verse 27. “The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A mew teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.”

Jesus preached, “The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” The Kingdom of God came to them not only as mere news but with authority and power. The news that the kingdom of God is near is good news to everyone because God’s kingdom comes to us with authority and power.

II. Jesus spreads the kingdom to a home and community (29 – 34)

“As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew” (29). To some people, the end of Sunday worship service means time to enjoy the world again. But for Jesus and his disciples, it was just part one of the holy Sabbath day. They continued godly fellowship in the home of Simon. No doubt they talked about the event in the synagogue and Jesus expounded the Scriptures to them. Then it came time for the Sabbath dinner. Jesus and his hungry disciples were there, but no food was being prepared, because Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever. Perhaps her fever came after she heard about Peter’s decision to follow Jesus, leaving everything behind. She might worry about her daughter’s future too much. When they told Jesus about her, he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them (30-31).

Through Jesus’ action we can learn two things. First of all, Jesus was mindful of a sick older woman. To many, another person’s fever is not so serious. Many young men are indifferent to the suffering of motherly women, having no idea to serve them. Jesus had a servant’s mind toward Peter’s mother-in-law. Jesus gently healed her fever. Though Jesus is mighty in spiritual authority, Jesus served this woman tenderly. When she was healed, she was happy to serve Jesus.

The second thing we learn here is Jesus’ care for his disciple Peter. Peter’s decision to follow Jesus was clear and absolute. Jesus expected this kind of commitment from Peter. But Jesus did not abandon or ignore Peter’s family. Jesus visited and blessed Peter’s family. Later, Peter’s wife became his dear missionary coworker and accompanied him on his journeys (1Cor 9:5). When a disciple commits his life to Jesus, Jesus blesses his family.

Look at verse 32. That evening, when the Sabbath was officially over, the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. This shows us that although Capernaum seemed to be a normal city, Satan was ruling behind the scenes. Jesus’ words and deeds revealed that the kingdom of God had come. People found real hope in Jesus. Suddenly, the whole town gathered at the door. And Jesus healed many who had various diseases. Jesus also drove out many demons. Jesus’ kingdom spread from the synagogue, to one house, and to the entire community. When Jesus is welcomed and accepted, any home or community can be transformed, and reflect the kingdom of God.

III. Jesus decides to preach all over Galilee through prayer (35-39).

Jesus must have been tired after working day and night. What did he do? 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.” Jesus renewed his strength through prayer. If Jesus prayed like this, how much more should we. The disciples were surprised that Jesus was gone. When they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” (37). How did Jesus respond? Look at verse 38. “Jesus replied, ‘Let us go somewhere else–to the nearby villages–so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.’” Jesus was ready to go somewhere else, leaving Capernaum right away. Jesus was ready to spread the good news all over Galilee. Through prayer, Jesus’ passion for Galilean evangelism was kindled. Through prayer, Jesus shared God’s heart for all those who were under Satan’s rule. Through prayer, Jesus kept on the offensive against the work of Satan.

Here we learn that Jesus renewed and strengthened his identity and purpose on earth as the Messiah through prayer. He came to preach the Kingdom of God. He came to restore the Kingdom of God in the hearts of people and on earth. Through prayer, he could reject temptation of getting popularity and keep focusing on preaching the Kingdom of God.

There are many people who are not sure why they are here. We can learn from Jesus to find our purpose of life in God through prayer. We cannot find our purpose in our situation, or by listening to people’s demands. We can find our purpose of life in God through prayer. Then we can say, “That is why I have come.” We can have great confidence in fulfilling our purpose from God. This gives us real joy and peace.

IV. Jesus’ compassion for a man with leprosy ( 40 – 45)

Mark records the event of Jesus’ healing of a man with leprosy. This event seems not to happen right after the previous events. However, this event tells us how Jesus treated each person very personally with love and compassion.

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” Here we don’t know whether his leprosy is the leprosy we know or not. Here Leprosy contains very serious, contagious, terrible skin diseases. Once a man is found to have leprosy, he or she should be cast out from the community and live in a solitary place wearing black clothes. People might look at him like a monster or a very dirty object. Children threw stones to him. He lost all dreams of his youth. No one could be with him. He felt cursed by God. Who could understand this man’s loneliness and broken heart?

One day, he heard of Jesus. Jesus was preaching the Kingdom of God. He heard that Jesus also healed many sick people and drove out many demons. He got to have faith that Jesus can heal his leprosy. However, he was hesitant to come to Jesus. He hadn’t approached people at all because he was not welcome by any one, not even one person. I can understand this man’s feeling a little bit. When I was kicked out from a communist student club, I did not have any one to talk because the club members were my only friends. Even though I was among many people, I felt that I was totally alone. Finally, he decided to come to Jesus. He did not doubt Jesus’ power to heal his disease. But he was not sure that Jesus would welcome. That’s why he said, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

What was Jesus’ response? He was filled with compassion. The recent NIV version says that he was indignant. At first I was very surprised to see the sentence that Jesus was indignant. I even looked up the word from a dictionary to see that there is another meaning for “indignant”. Compassion is not just being sorry for someone. Compassion is understanding someone in his or her shoe. Jesus was angry at the suffering that this man had suffered with. He deeply understood this man’s grief, frustration and loneliness. He heard this man’s crying even before he came to Jesus. Jesus knew this man tried to suicide several times. Jesus cried with this man like a father who finds his lost son who became a beggar on the street.

Let’s look at verse 41. “Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” He did not just say, “Be clean!” even though it was enough for this man’s physical healing. What this man needed most was someone’s warm touch. Through Jesus’ touch, this man felt Jesus’ love for him. The voice of Jesus transferred to him though this touch. “My son, I love you!” And Jesus said, “I am willing, Be clean!” From Jesus’ saying “I am willing”, he was so moved that he was accepted by Jesus. At Jesus’ word, immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Jesus commanded him to show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifices for his cleansing so that he could come back to the society. Jesus is not only a Mighty God who can save and heal us but also a compassionate Savior who wants to touch our deep wounds and loneliness.

We should envy this man with leprosy. He was miserable once. But he became a truly blessed man when he came to Jesus by faith as he was. We should be frank and humble about our sins and weaknesses. I believe Jesus loves you as so much as he loved this man with leprosy. He loves us even before we confess our sins or wounds. We don’t need to worry about condemnation or humiliation. When we bring our sins, wounds and weaknesses before Jesus, Jesus will touch us. He will cleanse and heal our hearts.

Jesus began his messianic ministry by preaching the Kingdom of God in Capernaum. His preaching was not a mere Bible knowledge. His teaching with authority accompanied changes in people. Healing and Driving out demons followed his preaching. His healing of the man with leprosy shows his mighty power and compassion for lost souls. The Kingdom of God is near. Is this good news for you, isn’t it? Let’s come to Jesus and be touched!