**PUT GOD’S WORD INTO PRACTICE**

October 5, 2014

Luke 8:16-25

Key Verse 8:21 “He replied, ‘My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.’”

We can say that studying the Bible is learning God’s goals and his vision for the world. But unless we put God’s word into practice, we are not sharing his vision and we grieve God. Most importantly we cannot be members of God’s family. Jesus said, “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.” When we study the Bible and put it into practice, then we become Jesus’ brothers and sisters, and heirs of the kingdom of God. In particular, we must practice our faith during storms of life. The storms I am talking about here are not snow storms or hurricanes. The Bible calls them trials and tests of our faith. They come in various forms such as sickness, financial problems, job, family, school and relationships just to name a few. God puts these storms in our life, not to give us a hard time and nor to punish us when we sin. But God uses these storms for his sovereign purpose so that we may know who he is and so that our faith may be mature through practicing our faith to trust in God.

I. Consider carefully how you listen (16-18)

Look at verse 16. “No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light.” Here “a lamp” is allegorically compared to the word of God and “lighting a lamp,” is compared to hearing the word of God. Suppose anyone lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. This man perverts the purpose of the lamp. The purpose of a lamp is to shine so that those who come in can see things through the lamp light. He also invites disaster of explosion of the jar or burning up those who are sleeping on a bed. No lawyer would want to defend this stupid fellow. Jesus’ point is that now that the disciples had heard his message, what were they going to do with it? “Bed” means rest, comfort, and indulgence. So “putting the lamp under the bed” means that laziness greatly hinders the light from shining. “Hiding it in a jar” means to hide our faith in our jobs and among our friends. We should not be ashamed to identify ourselves as Christians.

Shining the light is a battle. The darkness is real. Rifqa Bary is a teenager from Ohio in a Muslim family. Through Bible study, she confessed Jesus as Lord and became a Christian. She said that her father was so upset that he threatened to kill her. He was pressured by militant Muslims from his mosque. The darkness hates the light. God sent Jesus precisely to shine his light into this dark world. Jesus’ light drives out the darkness and brings the kingdom of God. Jesus wants to shine his light through us, even now. So we must not hide the gospel in fear and shame, but shine the gospel with boldness and courage. There is a child’s song about this: “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine; this little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine; let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.”

Look at verse 17. “For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.” This verse clearly tells us the final destiny of those who lived foolishly as ones who hid the lamp in a jar or under a bed. If we allow the message to be confined because of jobs or laziness, our neglect and failure will be exposed. Hiding of the truth will be revealed, and keeping it a secret will come to light.

Look at verse 18. “Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him.” If we are faithful in sharing the truth with others, then God will reveal new and deeper truths to us. If, on the other hand, we hide it because of jobs or laziness, God will deprive us of the truth we think we possess. What we don’t use, we lose. The disciples listened with a mind eager to understand and ready to believe and obey, and thus they understood the secrets of the kingdom of God. On the other hand, many other people heard with either indifference, or curiosity, or resolute opposition. They never understood the gospel.

When we hear God’s word, we need to understand. If we do not understand it or appreciate it, we will lose it. If we do not know how to explain the fundamental doctrine of Christianity such as resurrection of Jesus Christ, our faith is very vulnerable, especially when challenged by unbelievers. For example, can you explain why Jesus’ conquering death through his resurrection is the good news of great joy? First of all, what is the power of death? It reveals itself in many different forms. One form is that people are under great pressure to make a mark in this world. They want to do great things to make a name for themselves. It is the power of death, because death is the end of everything for them. But Jesus conquered death. In Jesus death is not the end of everything. It is just the beginning of new life in the kingdom of God. Jesus said, “The least in the kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist who was the greatest in the world.” So we do not need to struggle to be great. It took pressure off from me. It was good news of great joy.

II. Hear God’s word and put it into practice (19-21)

While listening carefully to God's word is important, it is not enough. We must put it into practice in a community of believers. In this part, Jesus introduces the spiritual family. One day Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Until now, Jesus had been an obedient and hardworking son as a carpenter apprentice under his father Joseph. But he left home suddenly and went around preaching the kingdom of God. In the traditional Jewish society, it was an intolerable act because he was the eldest son of the family. Jesus should work under his father, and later inherit his carpentry shop. But Jesus ignored family tradition and left home. So his relatives concluded that he was out of his mind. They determined to persuade him to give up his non-paying job and come back home. If necessary, they schemed to take him back by force (Mk 3:21). Probably Jesus’ mother expected from Jesus at least a certain kind of apology, saying, “I’m sorry, mother.” But they were not even able to get near him. His family members had to stand in line and wait for their turn to see him. Someone saw Jesus’ mother and brothers waiting for him. He thought they should be given first priority. So he told Jesus, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.”

How did Jesus reply? Look at verse 21. “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.” What he said sounded like his ignoring family ties. But this was not the case. What does Jesus mean? Members of Jesus’ family are those who know Jesus’ heart. Here “to hear God’s word” means to know God’s will for the world; “To put it into practice” means to make God’s will their own will. This is true even in this society. A man finds himself closer to people who are not their relatives. The deepest relationship of life is not merely a blood relationship. It is when people have common goals, common principles and common dreams that they become close. Even a husband and wife can be distant if they have different goal and different principle. Members of the kingdom of God are those who know God’s heart and share his vision for the world. The deepest relationship is not determined by blood, but by hearts and minds meshed together. The person closest to God is the person who obeys God and takes his word seriously. John 14:21 says, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

III. We must practice our faith during the storms (22-25)

Look at verse 22, “One day Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Let us go over to the other side of the lake.’ So they got into a boat and set out.” Jesus had been working very hard to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God in all the towns and villages. Jesus delivered many Bible messages and told beautiful parables. But most people who heard Jesus’ message did not accept it as the absolute word of God. They wanted something else from Jesus, according to their human desires. When they did not take Jesus’ word seriously, Jesus did not try to appease their appetites. Instead, Jesus wanted to focus on those who obeyed his word, namely his disciples. So he told them to go to the other side of the lake.

As they sailed on the lake, a squall came down upon the lake. A squall is a sudden, violent gust of wind, often with rain, snow or hail, may be accompanied by thunder and lightning. This squall began to toss the boat around like a child’s toy. Waves began to crash over and into their boat, filling it with water. They were in great danger. Just a few minutes ago, Jesus’ disciples had been giddy at the thought of a vacation with Jesus. Now as the sudden storm arose, their very lives were in danger. In an instant, their future prospect changed from most optimistic to disastrous. It was not because they had done something wrong. In fact, they were acting in obedience to Jesus’ command. Then why did it happen? By chance? No! Here we must understand that God gives storms of life to those who love him. When storms of life come, many people react in many different ways. They usually blame God or blame others. But we must realize that God disciplines those he loves through the storms of life. The storms of life are no accident. They are precisely God’s best love to each person.

At least four of Jesus’ disciples were fishermen who had experience handling a boat in all types of weather. They tried bailing out the boat, throwing water out of the boat. It was difficult because of the winds and the waves and the boat was turning and twisting back and forth and up and down. The more they tried, the more it seemed like a losing battle. With all their strength and all their experience, they could not keep up with the storm. They yelled at each other and screamed and began to panic, realizing that they could drown any minute and die. Matthew the former tax collector, who could not swim, pictured himself floating to the bottom of the lake dying. It was at that time, they went to Jesus in panic, to wake him up. Look at verse 24a, “The disciples went and woke him up, saying, ‘Master, Master, we’re going to drown!’” The fear of death gripped their hearts. They became paralyzed with fear that sent a terrible cold chill throughout their bodies. It is amazing that even though Jesus had done many miracles, including raising a widow’s young son from the dead in the town of Nain, they still did not believe that he was the Creator God yet.

Look at verse 24b. “He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided and all was calm.” With one word of his mouth, Jesus rebuked the wind and the waters and they immediately became calm. Jesus is the Creator God who has the power to rule nature. Jesus has the power to calm any kind of storm of life with one word of his mouth. We face the storms of painful relationship problems, health problems, career challenges, difficult school studies, and financial problems. No matter what the problem is, Jesus can calm our storm of life with one word of his mouth. Jesus brings us peace and victory.

After calming the storm, Jesus asked his disciples, “Where is your faith?” Jesus was most concerned about their faith. Jesus wanted them to trust in him during the storm. They had spoken out in fear, fear that they would drown. In truth, all people suffer from fear, and at the root of it is the fear of death (Heb 2:15). Satan torments people with fear until they become powerless. During ordinary times, it is not so difficult to talk the talk of faith. But during the life-threatening storms, our deep hearts are revealed. Jesus wants us to trust him absolutely in the midst of the storms. This faith pleases Jesus. Jesus is God, the Author of life. Jesus is the Christ, who rose victorious over death. When Jesus rules our hearts, we can have assurance of life and peace. So, we must remember Jesus’ words and his presence with us during life’s storms and depend on him. Through exercising our faith, it becomes strong, and we become powerful children of God.

Jesus’ disciples were amazed. They completely forgot about the storm and were filled with awe for Jesus. They said, “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.” The storm became the opportunity for Jesus to display his glory as the Son of God and for the disciples to learn deep trust in Jesus. When we follow Jesus, he sometimes leads us through storms. But he uses these storms to help us grow in faith and to take deeper root in our relationship with him.

In this passage we learned that we must consider carefully how we hear the word of God. Then we must put what we hear into practice, especially in the time of storms. Then we become Jesus’ brothers and sisters, members of God’s family. What a wonderful privilege it is to be heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ!