

THE TEACHING AND HEALING MINISTRY OF JESUS

Luke 4:31-44

Key Verse: 4:32

They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority.

Today's passage teaches us that the beginning of Jesus' ministry was focused on two things: preaching the word of God and healing the sick. Let us think about why Jesus started his ministry by teaching the word of God. May God also help us to learn how Jesus healed sick people with his personal touch on each person!

First, his words had authority (31-37). Look at verses 31-32. *Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he taught the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority.* On the Sabbath, Jesus taught the people the word of God. The main focus of his ministry was teaching the word of God. The people at that time were suffering from various economic, political, social problems under the oppression of the Roman Empire and King Herod. Teaching them the word of God did not seem practical. Humanitarian work would have been much more appealing. But Jesus taught them the word of God. Why? The word of God is no ordinary word. The word of God can make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2Ti 3:15). The word of God is the word of life. Jesus taught the people the word of God so that they might come to know God and receive eternal life. In John 6, we learn that Jesus fed a crowd of 5,000 hungry people with only 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish out of his compassion for them. They were so impressed by the miracle that they wanted to make Jesus king. But Jesus didn't come to this world to become a free baker. He came to save us from our sin and death. So when a crowd of people came to him the next day, he didn't give them free bread. Instead, he told them, "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you" (Jn 6:27). Jesus also declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (Jn 6:35). The people were not happy because Jesus refused to give them free bread. Many of them left him, grumbling. So Jesus turned to his twelve disciples and asked, "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68).

We have many problems in this world and in our personal lives. Sometimes we wish that a political savior would come to solve all our problems. But no one can help us with our spiritual problems—the problems of sin and death. We must realize that the ultimate answers to our life problems can be given only by God. He alone can save us from our bondage of sin and death. We can find the answers to our problems when the word of God comes to our hearts. Jesus has the words of eternal life. This is the reason why we devote ourselves to the study of the word of God.

There are many people who have no word of God in their hearts. As a result, they have no spiritual sense of right or wrong. They just follow the trend of this world. For example, the Bible teaches us that sex outside marriage and homosexuality are both

sinful before God. But today some young people consider them no big deal. But sin is still sin no matter what we call it. If we live by our desire, own logic or social consensus, many things become relative. But the word of God is absolute and does not change as people and ideas change. We must come to the word of God with a humble learning mind. We can find answers to all our problems and difficult questions in the word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." This was the reason why Jesus taught his people the word of God first, even though he knew they had many problems in life. From Jesus we learn that we must also share the word of God with young people in our generation, praying that they may accept the word of life in their hearts.

How did people respond to Jesus' teaching? Look at verse 32 again. *They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority.* They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority. What does it mean that his words had authority? The word "authority" is usually associated with a position of power in society. Cumberland County supervisors have the authority to tax your property. State troopers have the authority to pull you over on I-81 and ask you, "How fast you think you're going. Let me see your driver's license." However, the term "authority" here is different from such worldly power. Jesus' words had authority because they were the words of God. Mark says Jesus taught with authority, "not as the teachers of the law" (Mk 1:22). Jesus did not quote several prominent rabbis. He did not talk about the fine details of the Sabbath law such as you should not travel more than 5/8 of mile or carry anything heavier than 2 dried figs. Instead, Jesus taught them the word of God directly. As I said, the word of God is no ordinary word. The word of God is alive and active. It is sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Heb 4:12). The word of God can change a person's heart. It can transform a person's life. Josh McDowell, a popular Christian author and evangelist, was a frustrated teenager in rural Michigan. He wanted to be happy and to have a life with meaning. He had three questions in life that no one seemed to give him the answers: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? Then God led him to study the word of God in college and he became a Christian. Someone asked him, "How do you know you became a Christian?" He answered, Christ "changed my life." He confessed that Jesus was more than a carpenter. The word of God has transforming power!

The human Jesus had absolute faith in the word of God. It was his weapon to fight against Satan's temptations. Jesus had fasted for 40 days, when Satan came to tempt him in the desert with three things to which all humans are vulnerable: First, bread to satisfy the hunger; second, a shortcut to glory and success; third, an easygoing way to fulfill God-given mission. Each time, Jesus defeated the devil's temptation with the word of God (4:1-13).

So people were amazed at his teaching. And something happened to further convince them how his words had authority. Look at verses 33-34. *In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, "Go away! 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!” A demon or an evil spirit is Satan’s field agent. Some people think that there is no such thing as an evil spirit in this scientific age. Others are afraid of demons. Still others see lucrative potential in this subject, exploiting people’s fear and imaginations. Movies and books dealing with this subject made millions of dollars. What does the Bible say about this? We learn that demons are real. The Bible says that demons could cause mental disorder (Jn 10:20), violent action (Lk 8:26-29), bodily disease (13:11,16), and rebellion against God (Rev 16:14). Many people in this world are filled with fear and anxiety, as Satan plants fear in their hearts. Fear and doubt are Satan’s weapons of choice.

The demon in this passage tried to interrupt Jesus’ teaching the word of God, like a hackler. The demon was unhappy because people were listening to the word of God from Jesus. He cried out at the top of his voice: *“Go away! 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 knew that Jesus is the Holy One of God, when many people did not know Jesus. Satan is smarter than we are. After all, he was originally an angel that rebelled against God. Satan knows God but he refuses to worship God. Instead, he himself wants to be worshipped. His intention is to tempt us to join him in his rebellion against God to suffer eternal death with him. Satan is a murderer and a liar from the beginning (Jn 8:44).

The demon also knew that Jesus had come to destroy him. He knew that Jesus would not allow him to continue to torment the man. How did Jesus deal with the demon inside the man? Look at verse 35a. *“Be quiet!” Jesus said sternly. “Come out of him!”* The demon could not but obey the Messiah’s command. But he didn’t want to give up his victim easily. The demon threw the man down before them all and then came out without injuring him (35). Jesus’ words had authority over demons!

We learn that Jesus cared deeply about this one man who was suffering under the power of the demon. Nobody paid attention to the pathetic man, only calling him ‘the crazy man.’ But Jesus stopped his preaching in order to take care of the demon-possessed man. Jesus is a shepherd who cares for one lost sheep. How did the people respond to his healing of the man? Look at verses 36-37. *All the people were amazed and said to each other, “What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!” And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.* The people were very impressed by Jesus’ words of authority and power over evil spirits. They witnessed something amazing. Jesus cast out the demon from the man. Jesus came to cast out demons. This is good news to us as well. Even today, many people suffer from the torment of the devil. Some people refuse to worship God, thinking that they can be their own men. But the truth is that, when they are away from God, they come under the influence of the devil. Those who have no love relationship with God are under the demon’s rule. There is no middle ground. You cannot ride the spiritual fence. But when we have a love relationship with God, we can have beautiful love relationships with others. When we come to Jesus and accept his word, we can experience new life, new joy and a new vision in life. We don’t have to worry about demons possessing us as long as we are in Christ.

Second, Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law (38-39). Look at verse 38. *Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.* We don't know exactly how Simon's mother-in-law got sick. Perhaps it was caused by her worries about her son-in-law. Simon had been a hardworking fisherman. But she heard that lately he was spending more time with this country preacher, a carpenter from Nazareth. Perhaps she began to worry about the financial future of her daughter's family. Anyway, when Jesus arrived at Simon's house, she was suffering from a high fever. No one seemed to understand her sorrow and agony of life as a widow who had to live in her married daughter's house. But Jesus understood her. Look at verse 39. *So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.* Jesus had rebuked the demon. Now he rebuked the fever and it left her. His words had authority over a disease! How did she react to the healing touch of Jesus? She got up at once and began to wait on Jesus and his disciples, serving them with a delicious meal. In Jesus' time, widows had little or no chance of remarrying. They had no economic means. So widows lived a sorrowful life. Jesus comforted Peter's mother-in-law and made her well so that she could serve the mission team. Jesus is the God of compassion. In Jesus, an old woman can live a blessed life of serving the Lord.

Third, Jesus heals many people, one by one (40-41). Look at verse 40. *At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.* As soon as the Sabbath was over, there was a constant stream of people who came to him. They had various kinds of sickness. Old people with arthritis, men with chronic back pains, women suffering from hemorrhage, children with ear infections, and even teenagers with severe zit problems were brought to him. Today's medical doctors would have closed their offices at five o'clock sharp and tell the people to call for an appointment. Amazingly, Jesus cared for the sick people one by one. Laying his hands on each one, he healed them.

One UBF doctor told me how difficult it is to see dozens of patients everyday. Jesus was very tired. But he was filled with compassion and healed the sick one by one until everyone received a personal care. Most likely Jesus worked well into the night to take care of them all. This same Jesus is with us today as well. He is no longer confined by time and space. He is sitting at the right hand of God. He knows our personal struggles and cares for us. There are over 7 billion people in the world today. But Jesus does not see them as too many people. He sees each one of us as one who needs his personal touch. We are not some numbers in the eyes of our shepherd Jesus. He cares for each one of us, one by one, if we are willing to let him. We also learn from Jesus that we should take care of our Bible students, one person at a time, until he or she is healed through the word of God, until each one comes to know the Savior Jesus personally.

Look at verse 41. *Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah.* The demons shouted, "You are the Son of God!" They knew he was the Messiah. But Jesus didn't say, "Thanks for recognizing me. I appreciate it." Instead, he rebuked them and did not allow them to speak. Jesus didn't need the

testimony of the demons in his work. Jesus knew that their motive was not to help the people.

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 had worked hard until late into the night. But the next morning he got up early and went to a solitary place. Why did he go to a solitary place? 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 could find no time to pray because of the constant stream of sick people. But he found time to pray early in the morning. Through the quiet time of prayer, the human Jesus listened to God. He also pleaded with God. Most of all, he renewed his love relationship with God. Some people consider prayer as a shopping list of things they want from God. Prayer is not a one way communication line. We should not call God, tell him what we want from him, and then hang up, without asking him what he wants from us. Prayer is time for us to maintain a close relationship with God. Prayer is the measure of faith, because if we don't pray to God, we are telling him we don't need him.

While Jesus was praying, the people were looking for him. When they found him, they tried to keep him from leaving the town. They wanted him to keep on healing the sick people. Perhaps they wanted to build a big hospital so that Jesus could establish a medical mission there. They were excited about having a free physician in town. What did Jesus say to them? Look at verse 43. *But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."* Through his early morning prayer, Jesus found a clear direction for his ministry. The healing work was going well. He was getting popular among the people. But they needed healing of their sin-sick souls more than their bodies. He said, *"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."*

From today's passage we learn that Jesus' words have authority because it is the word of God. Jesus healed the sick, laying his hands on each one. May God help each of us to share the word of God with young people of our time so that they may be healed by the healing touch of our Lord Jesus!