I Am Willing, Be Clean

Mark 1:29-45

Key Verse: 1:41 “Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!”

Last week we studied that Jesus called his first disciples, Simon, Andrew, James and John while they were fishing in the lake. They were fishermen. Jesus called them to fish for people. Jesus called them to become fishers of men. Last Monday, my family and Kit were invited by one sincere Christian friend who loves Jesus. After the dinner we all sang together, “*I will make you fishers of men*.” “I will make you fishers of men, if you follow me.” Like this song, following Jesus is a joyful occasion. Following Jesus is the access to heaven. God’s calling itself is a blessing.

After Jesus called his disciples, he healed a demon-possessed man. Jesus rebuked the impure spirits and set the man free from demon-possession. Let us pray that Jesus may heal many demon-possessed people in our generation. Recently, the Korean drama ‘Squid Game’ became a global sensation. In that TV show, we see many people who were possessed by impure spirits. The answer to this drama is Jesus. Only Jesus heals this sick world and saves people who are lost and dying.

In today’s passage Jesus heals many, including Peter’s mother-in-law and a leper. In the midst of his busy healing ministry, Jesus prayed regularly every morning. He also continued to preach and teach. We can learn something special from this story.

First, Jesus heals many. (29-34) As soon as Jesus left the synagogue, he visited the home of Simon Peter and Andrew with James and John (29) This was because Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever. (30) We don’t know why she had a fever. Some said that she was upset because her son-in-law Simon suddenly left everything to follow Jesus, leaving his wife behind. Jesus went to her, took her hand, and helped her up. (31) Jesus might have put his hand on her forehead to check her fever. Then, he raised her up like a loving father does for her little daughter. As soon as Jesus touched her, the fever suddenly left her and she began to serve Jesus and his disciples. Jesus’s loving heart and touch healed Simon’s mother-in-law from the fever. Let us pray that Jesus’ loving heart and touch may heal all those who suffer from fever and COVID. Amen!

Look at verses 32-34. “***That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was***.” People usually closed their business or stopped working and went home to rest after sunset. But people kept bringing their sick to Jesus. Jesus must have been tired from healing the sick and meeting their demands all day long. Still, Jesus welcomed them and healed them all. At that time, he didn’t have any medical instruments or medicine. He healed all of them with the healing power of God and the touching love of the Messiah. He also drove out many demons. There is no disease which cannot be healed by Jesus. There is no demon which cannot be driven out by Jesus. Jesus is the healer, and he is the Savior. Amen!

There is no one who is perfectly healthy and sound on this earth. All people are sick one way or the other, small or big, temporary or chronic, physically or mentally, and so on. Jesus can heal them all. The prophet Isaiah said about Jesus who heals us: “*Surely he took our pain and bore our diseases...and by his wounds we are healed.*” (Is 53,4,5) We have many good hospitals, excellent medical doctors and nurses, and well-developed medications and systems, but we still need the healing power of God. Jesus can heal those that hospitals and doctors cannot heal. Jesus came to heal us from sickness and give us new life in him. Amen!

Second, Jesus prayed regularly (35-39) In the midst of his busy healing ministry, Jesus did not ignore his prayer life and preaching. He regularly prayed to God. ***Look at 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.***” At that time, Jesus healed many. According to v 32-34, people brought all the sick to Jesus even after sunset. He must have been tired and exhausted. Still, he got up early in the morning and prayed. He did not ignore his prayer life. Prayer is communication with God. Through prayer we listen to God and talk to him. One day Tim Chung, one of my Bible students, asked me to teach him how to pray. I answered him, “Talk to God.” He began to talk to God. Last week he prayed for others. I asked him to pray for himself. He prayed for himself, too. Jesus prayed for many suffering and sick people. He prayed for the calling of his disciples. He prayed for the Father’s will and daily direction because he always worked with the Father and the Spirit. (Jn 5:17-20) In John 5:19 he said, “*Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*”

Prayer is also known as spiritual breathing. No one can survive without breathing. No Christians can become healthy without a prayer life. St. Francis Assis said, “If a Christian ignores three things, he becomes corrupt: prayer, reading the word, and physical work. Jesus teaches us to maintain a regular prayer life in the midst of our busy schedules. Everybody is busy doing something. Still, we need regular prayer time at least once a day. We don’t need to get up early in the morning after working a late night. We need regular quiet time with God just once a day. More is better, but at least once a day. God help us to pray as the Lord Jesus showed us. Amen!

Look at verses 36-37. “***Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you***!” Jesus’ disciples might have thought that Jesus forgot the sick. How did Jesus answer them? Look at verses 38, “***Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby village—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.”***  Here, Jesus didn’t mean that he would not take care of the sick people, but taught them the importance of preaching the good news. People are sick and get healed. The healed people get sick again and will die anytime. They also need to hear the good news about the kingdom of God. Physical healing is a blessing, but temporal. Hearing the good news is a spiritual blessing and eternal. So, Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. (39) This part teaches us the importance of regular prayer and the word of God in the midst of our busy schedules. It also reminds us of Jesus’ words in John 6:61, which says, “*The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.*” Amen!

Third, I am willing, be clean (40-45) 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.***” Leprosy, known as Hansen’s disease today, is a contagious skin disease caused by the transmission of bacteria. Leprosy damages the skin and nerves. So, when it develops and damages the nervous system, the patient doesn’t feel any pain. Their faces are disfigured and their fingers and toes fall off when it becomes severe. In Jesus’ day, Moses’ law strictly forbade contact with lepers. Leprosy was regarded as an unclean disease, and lepers as cursed by God. According to Leviticus 13:45-46, lepers must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, ‘*Unclean! Unclean*!’ They also must live alone and live outside the camp. Lepers were cast out from their families and society. My daughter Grace came to see her family during her fall break. We were happy to see her. But lepers couldn’t see their family members on the day of the festival because they were lepers. They couldn’t get a job or work with others because they were lepers. When it rains, they didn’t have any place for shelter because they were cast out from society. They cried out with many tears when they thought about their miserable lives. But they couldn’t even wipe their tears away because they didn’t have fingers.

In today’s passage, one of these lepers came to Jesus. He was a man of faith. He violated Moses’ law by appearing in public. He begged Jesus on his knees, “*If you are willing, you can make me clean.*” He didn’t say, “If you are able, you can make me clean.” He knew that leprosy was an incurable disease. But he believed that Jesus could heal him from leprosy. He heard about Jesus who welcomed anybody and everybody from morning to late night and healed all of them. The leper had the courage to come to Jesus. He didn’t mind what other people thought or said, if only Jesus was willing.

How did Jesus respond to his request? Look at verse 41. “***Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!***” Jesus was indignant. Jesus might have been upset because of this man’s situation. This man must have lived a beautiful and wonderful life as a son of Abraham who had the image of God. But the disease damaged his soul and disfigured his body. In the old NIV, it says that Jesus was filled with compassion. This was the Messiah’s compassion on the helpless and disfigured sinners. Jesus had pity on this man with leprosy. Jesus’ heart was broken when he heard the man’s desperate plea for healing. Jesus was not hesitant. He didn’t even ask why he became a leper. He just reached out his hand and touched the man. Leprosy is contagious. If Jesus touched the man, he could have been infected. But Jesus didn’t mind. Jesus touched the man. By touching him, Jesus displayed his genuine love and care. When the man was touched, his soul and body must have been electrified by Jesus’ love. Since he became sick, no one dared to touch him. No one even approached him. But Jesus touched him and made him whole.

Today Jesus touches many sin-sick souls with his loving hand. Jesus touches the wounded souls and broken hearts with his healing hand. Jesus said, “I am willing. Be clean!” Jesus is willing to touch all people of all nations. Remember Jesus rode on a donkey when he was entering into Jerusalem. He was so humble and gentle that everyone, even little children, could touch Jesus who was riding on a colt. Are you suffering from an unknown sickness, spiritually or mentally? Are you isolating yourself from family or society because of your hidden problems? Jesus is willing to heal you and touch you.

What happened to the leper when Jesus said, “I am willing. Be clean!”? Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. (42) A miracle happened! The incurable disease was healed by the word of Jesus. Jesus has the authority to call his disciples. He has the authority to drive out demons. He has the authority to control a fever. Now Jesus has the authority to heal leprosy. All these prove that Jesus is the Almighty God and the Savior of the world. He is a Savior and healer. There is no disease and sickness that cannot be healed by Jesus. There is no person who cannot be changed by Jesus. Let us come to Jesus! Let us come to Jesus for healing. Let us come to Jesus for transforming!

In verses 43-44, Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning. He sent the healed leper to the priest for certification of healing. According to Moses’ law, healed lepers must show themselves to a priest and receive certification for a normal life after they are examined. Jesus gave him a direction for new life. Jesus also warned him not to tell anyone because the time for himself had not yet come. Jesus believed that the time for his appearance in public had not come. He always worked and lived according to God’s time schedule. But this leper didn’t obey Jesus’ word. He went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter the town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. (45) But the people still came to him from everywhere. Through today’s passage, let us learn Jesus’ prayer life and preaching ministry. Let us pray that we may have the eyes of Jesus and heart of Jesus, especially his compassionate heart for lost sinners. Amen!