

1st, Aug, 2021

Mark 4:20, 35-41

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Quiet! Be still!

1) Heaven grows like a seed.

Today is a famous scene of Jesus who calms even the furious wind. In the fourth chapter of Mark's Gospel, he describes what happened one day. During the day, Jesus talks about seeds as a parable of the Kingdom of God. Here, the seed is God's Word (verse 14). Then he tells us that the fruit will be produced depending on the condition of the land where the seed falls (Mark 4:1-20). Look at the verse 20, "Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop – thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."

This parable teaches us that the kingdom of heaven grows by the word as a seed grows (26-29). The principle by which the word grows is the principle of the Kingdom of God. We tend to think that the Kingdom of God is something that happens suddenly and all at once, but it is something that is created steadily, like a seed being sown in the soil, sprouting, and producing leaves. You sleep at night, wake up in the morning, and water and care for the seed repeatedly, and the seed, whose growth is not immediately apparent, eventually grows and bears fruit when summer passes and autumn comes.

In Japan, when students are in the early grades of elementary school, they always grow morning glories in the spring and keep a record of their growth. In Korea, I have the same homework, and I used to look forward to it very much when I was little. Every day, I would look at the morning glory seeds that I had buried and wait for them to grow. I was so happy when suddenly, at a certain time, green sprout popped out. It is very interesting to know that heaven is like a morning glory that grows.

2) Heaven grows even without sight.

This kind of principle is related to the word of God that we hear all the time. Jesus tells us that the word of God grows according to the principles of the Kingdom of God. One of its characteristics is that the word also has life and grows like a seed. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active. 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."

And our faith does not grow just by listening to the humanities and liberal arts courses. Our faith grows when we hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Romans 10:17 says,

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." Recently, we have become very knowledgeable about the humanities, science, health, etc., with all the knowledge on YouTube. When I asked to one of my friends, "What do you think of this? And she searches it on the internet and sends me five or six pieces of information. It's exhausting sometimes to be bombarded with information. But the information we really need to hear is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the life.

And as we listen to the word of God, we should always practice connecting it with our faith. Hebrews 4:2 says, "For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith." But the word which they heard did not profit them, because the word was not made manifest to them by faith. In order for what we hear in the Word to be beneficial, we should always practice connecting it with our faith. Just as we continue this humble work of planting seeds, watering them every day, waiting, watering them again, and waiting, we should also practice reading and thinking about the word day and night, listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and obeying God's will. And it is important to keep doing this work even if the environment does not improve drastically. The seeds of the Kingdom of Heaven are always growing, so we must be patient and wait for their growth. That's all for this morning's lesson. Now, let's put our faith into practice.

(3) A furious storm will come into our life.

Look at verse 35. It was evening, and Jesus and the disciples were crossing the river. Suddenly, in verse 37, there was a violent storm and the boat was covered with waves and filled with water. Hours later, the disciples, who had heard so much of the word in the morning and were so confident that they would bear a hundred times fruit, found themselves at the crossroads of life and death.

We often experience this kind of thing, don't we? We've all been blessed with a time of worship and come home to find that bicycle overturned and our children injured, or a family dispute breaking out just on the same day. It is at times like this that we instantly forget the blessings from God. Every day of our lives is a gale. At this time, just as the disciples' boat was filled with water and is still sinking, our heart can become dark and we can become angry. At this time, we should also call out to Jesus like the disciples did. "Jesus!"

The disciples shouted, "Teacher. Don't you care if we drown?" But how could he sleep in such a storm? Amazing, isn't it? Jesus got up and then he rebuked the storm. "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind stopped and became a riptide. Jesus' training begins.

"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Jesus scolded his disciples for their lack of faith. After experiencing a strong wind that was calmed by a single word from Jesus, the disciples were filled with great fear and reverence and said to each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him?" The disciples must have been deep reverence toward Jesus, the Almighty God, who calmed even the storms. Let us also look up to the Almighty God, Jesus Christ, who is above the storms in our life.

We have been going through the ordeal of the Covid19 disaster for about a year and a half. The news on NHK's national news at 7 o'clock, the news station at 10 o'clock, and News 23 are all very disturbing. In Japan, it was reported that Canada's heat waves were the worst in 1000 years. The wildfires in southern Canada, the landslide in Atami in Japan, and the trampling of the human rights of Aboriginal children and their parents, which has become a serious problem in Canada, are all in the news like a storm every day. In fact, some of my acquaintances have become mentally distressed and have withdrawn from their high school. There are always problems such as difficulty finding a job, going to college, injuries to children, depression, chronic illnesses, and so on. At these times, we want to cry, "Jesus, we are dying! Doesn't Jesus think anything of it? Is He indifferent or incapable?"

(4) Heaven grows even in a storm.

As Jesus said in today's verse, he would soon be saying, "Calm the wind! Be still!" Jesus is the almighty God who can solve problems immediately. If that's the case, I would like to hurry up and do something now. However, the Kingdom of God is steadily growing where the seeds are not visible. Even in the midst of this storm, the Kingdom of God is growing. This spiritual growth is invisible, so we need spiritual eyes to discern it. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Faith is the ability to see the unseen. Here, Jesus actually shows us what faith looks like. He was sleeping peacefully even in the midst of a storm. That state of complete peace is a manifestation of faith. You may think that Jesus was able to do this because he was God's son, but he was not in his post-resurrection glory, he was just an ordinary man like us. Yet, the reactions of Jesus and his disciples were completely different. Why is that?

5) Jesus' perfect peace with our God Father

Jesus' perfect peace comes from God. Jesus was with God in the midst of a storm, and his peace was a sign of that. John 17:21 says, "So that they may all be one, Father,

just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." Just as Jesus was able to be with God in the storm and maintain his peace, we can also maintain our peace through this faith. This faith is possible with the help of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:26, 27, "But the counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

This peace is Jesus Christ Himself. This Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. The Holy Spirit has been indwelling our hearts since the day we believed in Jesus. God and us are always together. It is similar to how a child who is held in his father's arms can always be at peace even when bombs are falling during wartime, isn't it? When we believe in the presence of God in our midst, we, like Jesus, should not look at the storms, but be confident in the presence of God who controls them. In this peace, we can pray to Jesus and ask Him to help us.

(6) Jesus is God Almighty

Jesus calms the storms. When the disciples asked Jesus Christ for help, He immediately provided a solution. God will always help us when we pray and rely on the Holy Spirit. When we pray in Jesus' name, our difficult circumstances will change. It can be solved. Instead of being controlled by our environment, we can control our environment with faith. Pastor R.T. Kendall of England said, "Faith does not grow with an attitude of believing when the problem is solved. Believe first when you have a problem. When you have faith, you will experience the Almighty God" (More of God, by R.T. Kendall, published by Charisma House, 2019).

I pray that we will experience many storms being calmed by praying to Jesus in our daily lives. Because of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God is above the authority of this world. When we pray and believe in Jesus, we can have victory over the world. 1 John 5:4, 5, "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

7) My Testimony and adaptation

I could say that I prepared today's message for myself. I am the kind of person who can be surprised by small troubles such a slightest wave. As far as I remember, I was always home alone from the age of three or four. My father and mother were not at home. Maybe that's why I was always so anxious with and afraid of the outside world. I still

remember one day when I was home alone, I got a thorn in my finger and it bled a little. I was four years old at the time, I thought, "Oh, I'm going to die." I have always felt anxious about small things.

That was why it was very difficult for me to raise my children on my own as a foreigner after my divorce 14 years ago. I think it started to make me to be in exhaustion and menopause in my middle age. But three months ago, I suddenly experienced a panic attack. I was sweating and frozen in fear that I was completely trapped. This panic attack was caused by internet problems and suspicious phone calls. I was worried that it was a scam, and I really thought I needed to run to the police.

When I panic, I was suddenly struck with a fear that I could not get out of this situation. Like the disciples in the small boat in today's message. I experienced a situation where I was stuck in all directions. At that time, I had to prepare the message for June. I couldn't even pray, so I just quieted down and closed my eyes. I remembered this verse from my mind. Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, I kept repeating it in my head. And I sat down in my chair, opened my Bible and started reading the Word of God, even though I was in a hurry to go to the police. After about two hours of reading the Bible, I was thankful and able to say, "Oh, maybe it's not a scam, I'll just wait and see it more." It was a moment that seemed like a miracle.

One thing I learned from this experience is that when you experience something like a storm, I should seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first before trying to solve something on my own. It's a matter of priorities. The Kingdom of God begins with the Word, so read the Bible. And you realize that seeking God's righteousness is to pray quietly in fellowship with God.

How about you all? The world of Covid- 19 may seem to you as if the God of goodness is sleeping in it. It's not just it, is it? Problems that are beyond our ability to solve are coming at us like high waves in our daily life. In this situation, God is invisible and we only see the painful environment, but we need to exercise the eyesight of faith. Our faith gives us the ability to focus on the invisible God. Just as Jesus kept his eyes fixed on the invisible God in the middle of the storms, we are to do the same.

We listen to the word of God a lot, don't we? We can hear a lot of the word of God in worship services and even on YouTube these days. However, after listening to the Word, we need to be strong enough to put it into practice. God's Word is alive, so it grows like a seed. Our faith needs to grow as well.

James 5:7-8, "Be patient, then brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rain."

Let us believe in the growth of heaven and pray with patience. The storms will continue until the second coming of Jesus Christ on earth, but because we are with Him, we can be at peace. Then the storms will die down. The problem will be solved in God's way.

Let's pray together.