

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
February 25, 2018

Peace and Be Still!

Mark 4:35-41

1:35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

1:36 And Simon and those who were with him searched for him,

1:37 and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.”

1:38 And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”

1:39 And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

1. Jesus Ceased the Wind

Today’s verses tell us that Jesus and his disciples went across the Sea of Galilee to the other side. When they leave the shore, the great windstorm arose. The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by mountains and is like located in the bottom of soup bowl. Because of the temperature change, it is possible to occur the windstorms. Most of Jesus’ disciples were fishermen of the Sea of Galilee so that they knew all about the lake; however, this windstorm was not the one they had ever experienced.

However, Jesus was sleeping in that windstorm. His disciples cried and said to him “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” And then Jesus said to the windstorm, “Peace! Be still!” and the windstorm was gone. His disciples were scared Jesus more than the windstorm.

They looked each other and said, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

“Who then is this?” I am sure everyone understand the answer, right? When Jesus’ disciples were asked “and then who I am?”, they answered “You are Christ” His disciples confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, Christ and Savior. But this was before the Crucifixion and Resurrection. They confessed with their mouths; however, they could not act accordingly. When Jesus was arrested, they ran away or hid themselves. But they met Jesus who was resurrected from death, accepted Jesus as their Lord, received the Holy Spirit, and became follower of him.

The Gospel according to Mark was written for the answer of ”Who then is this?” We have been reading the Gospel according Mark little by little for this Lent. When we finish reading this Gospel, we will understand that Jesus is the Son of God as it is written in the beginning of this Gospel. I’m praying all of us may be lead to the confession: “Jesus, you rule the winds, waves, and all. You are the Son of God, our savior, our Lord,” and the life based on the confession of faith.

2. Sabbath

Let us learn today’s verse from the viewpoint of “training for godliness.” Jesus said to the winds and to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” I think the disciples thought that the words were also spoken to them. The disciples who were afraid of the storm also needed to listen to the voice, “Peace! Be still!”

Every time I read these verses, I realize that the storm of problems

and difficulties around me. I asked Jesus, “Lord, please say ‘peace and be still!’ to the storm surrounded me. When I prayed so, the Lord taught me that my mind was also stormed. Then I also prayed, “Please say ‘peace and be still!’ to my soul, too.”

I learned I need the training of “sabbath” when the storm comes to my situation and my soul. “Sabbath” came from a Hebrew word, “shabbat.” The word means “to stop” or “to rest.” God gave us command that we have to take rest one day a week. This command is all for our benefit. If we just work and work and have no rest, our work became no more efficient, and we may die from over work. In Japan many workers died from over work. It says, “*Karoushi*” in Japanese, and this Japanese became an English word. “*Karoushi*” appeared in the Oxford Dictionary since 2002. It’s not a pride for Japanese even Japanese words became popular. God commands “sabbath” for us. We need it not only one day a week, but also one third of a day for sleep. We need “break” in working time.

We are addicted to possessions and money, and try to store more than enough. Jesus said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.” (Matthew 6:19) On the contrary, we become anxious when we feel not to get enough. Jesus also said, “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" (Matthew 6:31)

People believe they should avenge on those who hurt them, and there is a chain of reprisals in the world. When Jesus was arrested by the people sent by Jewish authorities at the night before crucifixion, Peter struck a servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this!” (Luke 22:51) And he touched his ear

and healed him.

Jesus also said, “Do not grumble among yourselves.” (John 6:43) The Bible says, “Do not go on sinning” (1 Corinthians 15:34) and “Stop your threatening.” (Ephesians 6:9) Lust brings other lusts. Anxiety brings other anxieties. Revenge brings revenges. A sin brings other sins. We need to stop these things. The chain should be broken. Our worship day is called “Sabbath.” This day we stop what we’ve done, and go to worship. The reason why God gave us this day, one day a week, is that we stop daily routines and devote to worshipping God. We also have daily prayer time by quitting work, house work, hobby, pleasure, and social activities. By quitting these things, we will be released from the worldly things. If we don’t keep the day of worship or daily prayer time, we will become the slaves of the world, lusts, and sins.

Everyone loves holiday, and enjoys break time. Why do we bring the worldly things into the Lord’s day, the rest day of our souls? Why do we make us busy by sacrificing the daily prayer time, the break time of our souls? If we don’t have rest in our souls, we may just go on neglecting the voice of Jesus, saying, “peace and be still!” This generation makes us busy in various ways. Our life always storms. Therefore, we need to listen to the voice, “Be still.”

3. Silence

“Silence” comes after “sabbath.” “Silence” matches “sabbath.” “Sabbath” means to stop actions; physical and psychological. “Silence” does not mean just not to open mouth, but to listen to the words of God and meditate Him.

Once I heard a lecture of a sound professional. According him, we are influenced by the sounds that we hear. We feel peace or anxiety, joy or sorrow by what we hear even unconsciously. Twittering of birds make us joyful, and the heat beat of mothers make babies peaceful when babies listen to it in their mother's breast. The professional said that "silence" is the best sound makes us peaceful. However those who listen to music all the day wearing earphones may feel insecure when they are in silence. They cannot keep silence only in less than one minute silence prayer. They get hooked on sounds, and it is not healthy for us. "Silence" needs for everyone, especially in this noisy generation.

Please see this.

aspirituallifewithoutsilenceislike
asentencewithoutspaces
thespaceshelp
usmakesenseoutofthesentencesilence
helpsusmakesenseoutofourlifewithgod

Can you read it? It's very difficult to read. Then, how about this?

A spiritual life without silence is like a
sentence without spaces. The spaces help us
make sense out of the sentence. Silence helps
us make sense out of our life with God.

Now, you can read it. It reads, "A spiritual life without silence is like a sentence without spaces. The spaces help us make sense out of the sentence. Silence helps us make sense out of our life with God." As it says, silence helps us better to understand the meanings of our life.

While we are listening the noise from outside or inside, we cannot

listen to the words of God. If you only just keep talking, you cannot listen to others in the conversation. It's same as in the conversation with God. Prayer is a dialogue with God. Prayer does not complete by only talking what we want to say to God. Prayer completes by listening to God.

Dr. Chuck Swindoll wrote an interesting paragraph in his spiritual training book. He wrote the conversation between an interviewer and Mother Teresa on CBS TV.

When you pray, what do you say to God?

I don't say anything. I listen.

Well, okay ... when God speaks to you, what does He say?

He doesn't say anything. He listens.

The interviewer looked bewildered. For an instant, he didn't know what to say. He asked Mother an explanation. And, Mother replied, "And if you don't understand that, I can't explain it to you."

The words of Mother have deep meanings. We may be able to understand the meaning when we will be led to silence after having prayed so hard and finally no words left to say. However, even now, we can understand a part of the meaning if we want to have deeper communion with God.

Jesus' words came from the Bible. It's obvious that the words, "Peace! Be still!", came from Psalm 46:10. Psalm 46 says, " God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling." These are the powerful

words of trust in God. Even believers encounter natural disasters and life threatening crises that the Psalm says, “the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, ... its waters roar and foam, ... the mountains tremble at its swelling,” and “we are surrounded by the chariots of enemy.” But God commands the mountain, the sea, and armies, saying. “Be still!” He says, “Be still, and know that I am God” to his people. “Be still, and know that I am God.” Yes, we know God in silence. And those who know God in silence will be led to peace and tranquility in their mind. Let us train ourselves not to talk too much and let God talk more to us this week.

(Prayer)

Father, you said, “Be still and know that I am God.” Son Jesus, you also commanded, “Peace! Be still!” Make all the believers stop their works and trust in your works, refrain our words and listen to your voice. Make this happen by the Holy Spirit. Lord God, we believe and ask this in the name of Jesus.