

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 1:35-45

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Let's continue reading Mark 1:35-45.

Yesterday, we witnessed a day in the life of Jesus, from teaching in the synagogue in the morning, where He demonstrated authority unlike the scribes, to casting out demons from a man. In the afternoon, He healed Peter's mother-in-law of a fever at Peter's house. As evening approached, people from the whole city gathered at Peter's door, bringing many sick and demon-possessed individuals. Jesus healed each one and cast out demons. It's important to note that Capernaum was already a large city at that time, the hometown of the prophet Nahum, with two harbors, making it a prosperous urban center. Therefore, the assembled crowd likely numbered in the hundreds, and it's uncertain how long Jesus was occupied. Certainly, it was late into the night. We see Jesus, as depicted by Mark, diligently fulfilling His duties and indeed keeping busy.

Regarding the account of Jesus' day, two points are noteworthy: Firstly, that day was the Sabbath, according to Moses' law, on which day no work was to be done. However, Jesus, being the Son of God and the Lord of the Sabbath, saw God's people afflicted by diseases and tormented by demons, unable to find rest. Therefore, Jesus labored personally with the aim of granting rest to the people. His concern was not with the legalistic observance of the Sabbath but with providing actual rest. He was the Lord of the Sabbath, and through His laborious work, He ensured that everyone could find rest.

Secondly, Jesus spoke and acted with authority. He was a person of authority, and in the world, it's usually those in high positions who are served by those in low positions. Yet, Jesus, on the contrary, served those without authority. He was high in position but served those of lowly status. Jesus set the best example for the church, as He stated in Matthew 20:26, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant." Jesus

emptied Himself to serve everyone, and on that day in Capernaum, He labored diligently until late into the night.

Verse 35: "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed."

This verse reveals Jesus' diligence on earth. The reason He could please God was that every morning, before dawn, He would go alone to a deserted place to pray to the Father. Despite being busy until late into the night the previous day, Jesus still rose before daylight and left the crowd to go alone to the wilderness for intimate communion with the Father.

In this communion, He understood the Father's will, knew the direction of His work, and wasn't bound by work. He wasn't concerned with people's welcome or praise; He could even set aside people's needs to seek solely the Father's will. In this intimate communion, He could be renewed and refreshed, which was the source of His power. Dear brothers and sisters, no matter how busy our lives are, no matter how heavy the burden of serving, daily morning prayer and communion with the Father are absolutely necessary. This ensures that our service is grounded, knowing that it pleases our Heavenly Father. It also empowers and yields fruit in our service, for our Heavenly Father is the source of our strength.

Verses 36-37: "And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, 'Everyone is looking for You.'"

After a busy night the day before, the disciples were likely busy until late into the night as well. That evening, the disciples must have been extremely excited. They probably initially thought they should stay there and do great things, with such fruitful work at the start. Healing the sick and casting out demons every day, meeting people's needs, and solving their problems - such a life would have been so meaningful, with gratitude and praise from people. However, they woke up in

the morning to find Jesus gone. Moreover, many people had already gathered at Peter's door. What about these sick people? They must have searched everywhere. Mark vividly describes how Simon and the others pursued Jesus, probably Peter's direct testimony to Mark.

The disciples, all flustered, searched everywhere to quickly find Jesus and address the vast needs. This formed a stark contrast with Jesus' calm and tranquility. They found Jesus in the wilderness and eagerly told Him, "Everyone is looking for You." We know people always have difficulties and needs. Now that someone like Jesus, who can meet people's needs and solve their difficulties, is available, of course, everyone is seeking Him. The disciples were excited to see so many people looking for Jesus, thinking this was the work they were meant to do. Let's see how Jesus responded.

Verse 38: "But He said to them, 'Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.'"

Jesus came before the Father in the morning, communing with Him intimately. He understood the Father's will, plans, and blueprint. The Father wanted Him to go elsewhere, to nearby villages, to preach there as well. What is preaching? It is about repentance, believing in the Gospel, and obtaining eternal life. Jesus said, "For this purpose I have come forth." He came to preach, not to heal diseases or cast out demons, because even if someone is healed, they may fall ill again and ultimately face death. Only by receiving eternal life can one avoid eternal death, which is God's ordained blessing. Casting out demons merely removes one demon, and if the Holy Spirit doesn't enter to dwell, even stronger demons may return and the person's condition may worsen. Jesus knew very clearly that His ministry was about preaching the Gospel of God, leading people to repentance, faith, and eternal life.

Verse 39: "And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons."

After hearing Jesus' words, the disciples obeyed. They left Capernaum and went from city to city, village to village, throughout Galilee. They preached in synagogues and cast out demons. Synagogues were places where devout Jews gathered. Jesus preached in the synagogues because He Himself was the Word from the beginning, and now, incarnate, He was completing redemption on Himself to enable people to obtain eternal life by repenting and believing in Him. As for casting out demons, it meant delivering people from the devil's oppression and dominion. We must understand that healing diseases and casting out demons are means, not ends. They prepare people's hearts, making them soft and receptive to receive God's word and obey the Gospel.

Dear brothers and sisters, let's learn to serve the Lord. It's crucial to understand that we serve the Lord, not just the tasks at hand. People will always have needs, leading to endless work. Therefore, work is never done. Before beginning any task, we must first ask ourselves if it's the primary work the Lord has for us. God values people far more than He values work. If there are no suitable individuals, God would rather temporarily set aside the work, wait, or prepare suitable people.

Jesus clearly knew that taking these few disciples from city to city preaching was far more beneficial and fulfilling for them than staying in Capernaum to heal and cast out demons. In His three and a half years of ministry on earth, Jesus' main focus was the development of His twelve disciples. His movements on earth were essentially a classroom for these twelve disciples. The preaching, healing, casting out of demons, and performing miracles by Jesus were all part of their curriculum. Now, as Jesus takes them throughout Galilee, it's the initial stage of learning for these four disciples. In the following verses from 40 to 45, Jesus heals a man with leprosy, likely occurring during His journey through Galilee.

Verse 40: "And a leper came to Him, imploring Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying to Him, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.'"

Leprosy was a highly contagious skin disease that destroyed the nerve endings in the skin, causing a loss of sensation to heat, cold, pain, etc. As a result, affected

individuals would not know to avoid dangerous situations, leading to various injuries such as ulcerations and amputations. Leviticus 13:45-46 instructs that those with leprosy must tear their clothes, leave their hair loose, cover their upper lip, and cry out, "Unclean! Unclean!" They were required to live outside the camp, and when others approached, they had to loudly declare their uncleanness to warn them and prevent the spread of the disease.

People generally avoided those with leprosy, yet here comes a leper, kneeling before Jesus and saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." This person demonstrated great humility. He knelt before Jesus, acknowledged His great power, and had faith in His ability to heal. He said, "If You are willing," indicating that he recognized Jesus' authority but was unsure if Jesus would be willing to heal him. Thus, he had full confidence in God's ability but left the decision in Jesus' hands. Such humility, faith, and recognition of authority touched Jesus' heart.

Verse 41: "Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed.'"

Jesus, moved with compassion, immediately replied, "I am willing." Not only did Jesus verbally respond, but He also reached out and touched the leper, saying, "Be cleansed." Jesus' words carried healing power. He didn't need to touch him, but He chose to, not only healing his disease but also filling his heart with comfort. We don't know how many years this person had suffered from leprosy. During this time, he hadn't touched another person's skin. People avoided him for fear of contagion, so besides his physical pain, he experienced complete isolation. He hadn't interacted with anyone or felt the warmth of human touch. Now, Jesus reached out and touched him, allowing him to feel an overwhelming sense of love and respect.

Verse 42: "As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed."

Jesus' words were filled with power. When He said, "Be cleansed," the leprosy immediately left the man, and he was cleansed.

Verses 43-44: "And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.'"

Here we see that Jesus "strictly warned him" - what did He warn him about? We see Jesus being very cautious and careful, telling him, "See that you say nothing to anyone." Jesus wasn't trying to hide His goodness from others. Of course, Jesus never sought glory from people, but when He said this here, it was because of the trust God had placed in Him. He didn't want this man to spread the news of his healing. Why? You'll understand in the following verses. Jesus repeatedly warned him not to tell anyone.

However, the man didn't obey Jesus' command, perhaps out of good intentions or gratitude. Instead, he spread the news, resulting in a negative outcome. As a result, Jesus could no longer openly enter the city but had to stay in desolate places outside. People from all over still sought Him out. We see here that despite the man's good intentions, his actions hindered Jesus' preaching. Truly, human goodwill cannot accomplish God's work.

Dear brothers and sisters, today is no different. We must understand that the purpose of the gospel is to bring forgiveness of sins to people and to grant eternal life through belief. This is God's ordained eternal blessing. In our journey of grace, some may experience healing, others may find solutions to their problems, and some may have their needs met. These are all ways God strengthens our faith and prepares us with special grace along our journey of grace.

However, these are not the purpose of the gospel. Many times, when we receive blessings, we rise to testify for God, but our testimonies lose focus. Instead of leading others to the true gospel, which is Jesus Christ Himself, we divert their

attention to the benefits. If our testimony leads people to seek personal benefits rather than Jesus Christ Himself, it cannot advance the kingdom of God and may even become a hindrance to it. May God have mercy on us.

Let's pray together: Lord, please adjust our hearts and ensure that our service is pleasing to You. Help us establish a lifestyle where we come before You every morning in intimate communion with the Father, ensuring that our service is in accordance with His will. Our ability to serve also comes from the Father's provision. Help us exalt Jesus Christ in our service, not focusing on the grace and benefits we receive from God, but ensuring that Christ is always the center of our service. Bless our service to bring people to Jesus Christ. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.