

Blessing from an Empty Hand

John 21:3-4

A Christian woman had a talking parrot as a pet. She has never been able to teach the parrot how to say anything. However, the parrot could say one sentence, "Kiss me, please," which it learned while it was in the pet store. Her pastor has a parrot too. Whenever the woman visits the pastor's house, she hears his parrot say, "Let's pray." She is surprised that the parrot was able to learn to speak and says it so clearly. She became very envious of the pastor and his parrot. So one day the lady borrowed the pastor's parrot to try to have it teach her parrot some more words. The two parrots met. The pastor's parrot greeted the other first and said, "Let's pray." Then her parrot replied, "Kiss me, please." Then the pastor's parrot said with smile, "Oh, thank you LORD, you finally answered my prayer."

Of course, this is not a true story, but there is an important message here. The important thing is 'who are we with?' If we meet good people, our life can have a higher probability to succeed. On the other hand, if we meet bad people, our life can have higher probability to fail.

A successful salesman once said, "Real sales begin when someone refuses something." Becoming a success or failure in life is more important than making individual successes or failures in life. Once you fail at something, it doesn't mean that your life is a failure. Once you succeed at something, it also doesn't mean that your life is a success. The important thing is that we can get closer to God when we fail. If we hold on to Jesus Christ with empty hands, our empty hands can then be filled with blessings. Today's scripture reading is a good example of this.

The disciples had come from Jerusalem to Galilee to see Jesus Christ rise from the dead and they had been waiting on Him with excitement. However, they were disappointed because they had been waiting for a long time. So they went out to fish again but didn't have any endurance. What was their result? In verse 3, it says, "So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing." There was no income that night. We should learn from this: no endurance, no income.

There was a medical doctor who was arrested by German police near Auschwitz during World War II. He shaved everyday with broken glass even as he watched Jewish people leave for the gas chamber and laboratories. Other people gave up saying, "My life is over!" But the doctor never gave up. Every afternoon was the time they would pick people to kill. But the Nazi didn't send him to the gas chamber because his face was very neat. After the German's downfall, he was rescued from Auschwitz and moved to Spain where he became a surgeon. He said, "God's help is never late. Only we are too hasty."

We should never give up in our life. Miracles and the opportunity for a good life will surely come when you are patient and when you wait on the LORD. No miracle happens accidentally. Most miracles are given to those who endure with faith and prayer when the situation is desperate. Endurance is not easy but we can learn many things from it.

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Sometimes we think that when everything is not going well, “It’s all over.” However, if we don’t lose hold of our dreams and mission, our life will not end. When man despairs he meets God’s desire. If we do not give up our dreams, tomorrow will be a shining day and it will be given to us.

Sometimes ministering is not easy. Sometimes I hurt others, but I don’t do it on purpose. And sometimes, I get hurt from others. If I get hurt and I think about it, I will have a hard time from not sleeping right, not eating... However, there is an excellent medicine that can cure us rapidly. It’s having a vision.

History belongs to those who moved forward with a vision. We should never give up our dreams and the visions that we have. Our future comes from our dreams. The reason why we have to hold onto them is because there will be a beautiful tomorrow coming toward us.

Actually, if you think about it, it is very hard to believe in Jesus Christ. So we should make Jesus’ dream as our own dream. Therefore, we who believe in Jesus Christ will never give up our dreams even though we face difficult circumstances. We will not lose our dreams.

The disciples in today’s text went fishing and gave up their dreams. But the interesting thing is that they are all expert fishermen but yet couldn’t catch any fish all night long. The disciples sadly suffered with broken hearts because they couldn’t catch any fish.

In verse 4, it says, “Jesus stood on the shore.” Jesus came early in the morning to His disciples who had nothing in their hands. That’s our Jesus. We are typically interested in people who are rich. We are not interested in people who are poor. But Jesus Christ is different. He is interested in all kinds of people; especially the poor – those that have nothing.

The world says, “Power is righteousness.” On the other hand, Christianity says, “Love is righteousness.” But sometimes Christians do think that power is righteousness. So when someone has power, people come to them for assistance even though they don’t really need any of their help. However, when we fail at something or have no power, no one comes to us. That pretty much describes all of us.

But our Lord Jesus Christ is different. When we think that our faith in God is good enough, we usually don’t concern ourselves with Jesus that much. But when we do concern ourselves with doing something for God, He is there for us.

God isn’t concerned about people when they think that they have power. God comes to us lovingly when we don’t have power. When people turn their back on us, it’s a great opportunity to meet Jesus Christ. Also, when people give us the cold shoulder, it is at that moment that Jesus is beside us.

We think that Jesus doesn’t want to come near us when our faith life is not enough compared to His expectation. However, He is still there any time. Our Lord Jesus Christ never takes our mission away even though we may fail at it several times. Rather, He comes to see us and hug

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us, and gives us the mission again. That's why having empty hands are such a big blessing for us.

When we look at verse 4, it explains to us that the disciples met Jesus early in the morning. He didn't come to them early in the morning. He probably had been watching them before that, probably since dawn. However, the disciples didn't realize that Jesus was there. They didn't see him because they were working so hard trying to catch fish. However, Jesus appeared to them when they were disappointed with the results of their effort.

We are the same. If we meet the struggles in our lives by ourselves, we can barely see Jesus. However, when we feel like we have no power or we've lost our heart for living, that's the time to see Jesus.

There was a pastor in Korea in the early 1970's. When he was young, his hobby was oratory (public speaking). He always won first place whenever he participated in public speaking contests. He became a pastor when he was 27, and opened a church with seven people in his home when he was 29. After nine years, the church membership increased to 5,000. Because he was such a good speaker, his preaching became even more powerful.

He also made a lot of money. He was the richest man among all the Korean pastors. When he was 32, he had written 96 books and became the principal of high school that he established with his own money. When he was 45, he was appointed as the Minister of Education from the President. He was handsome, well spoken, and smart.

However, God cursed him. He broke down when he was 50. He couldn't talk anymore and he wasn't able to control his body. He was almost paralyzed and he cried everyday so that he could speak and pray as he had in the past. "God, I really want to see my congregation. Please give me a chance to preach at my church before I die. Then I can thankfully die with a smile." He prayed this everyday. Finally, he was able to move a little bit after three years. He ultimately was able to lead over 500 revival services. When he was invited as a guest speaker, he always emphasized these words, "I became a fool because I was conceited before God."

After all, empty hands are the way to receiving God's blessing. Therefore, do not despair when your hands are empty. When a door is closed, God will always open another door for you. Failure and empty hands don't mean that we should stop; rather we should change our direction. When we change our direction to be more Jesus-centered, God will bless our lives. Failure should be an opportunity to seek Jesus. If we seek Jesus when we fail, then is not a real failure in life, because it becomes success in life. However, if we experience success with our own righteousness, we will become a failure in life

Why should we be careful when we tell our testimony about God? It is because we may try to place ourselves higher than Jesus. Yet Jesus is the only way that we have to be lifted up. Each of us tells our testimony about God so purely the first time. Yet, when someone becomes famous for their testimony, the usually quit their job and want to become a professional guest speaker for revival services. When we give our testimony about God, we may be able to add our own little fun and adventurous stories to it. This will make us feel pride as a good Christian and

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a smart person. We will no longer be Jesus-centered; rather we will become me-centered. So that's why we should be careful when we tell our testimony about God.

There was a person who told his testimony about God often. But he later said that he is not going to his testimony any more. The first time he truly told his story about God. But the more he testified, the more he added his own righteousness and tales of heroic stories. Eventually he declined to be a guest speaker. We should always know that everyone is the same in God's sight. Nobody can live without Jesus.

What we want and what we wish for cannot control our life. Even though we sometimes encounter very hard moments in our lives, we should hold on to Jesus our Lord with empty hands. Even though we don't understand God's will, we should never give up our expectation about God's grace through the hard times. We will meet God through failure and breakdowns in our lives and he will allow us to bear fruit. What is important to us is that our faith is in God. I pray that we continue to believe in God who will give us blessings when he sees our faith and that we are going forward to the living God with empty hands.