Luke Lesson 38 (2020)

**JESUS REBUKES AN UNBELIEVING GENERATION**

Luke 9:37-43

Key Verse: 9:41

“‘You unbelieving and perverse generation,’ Jesus replied, ‘how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.’”

Have you ever been rebuked by someone? I have. I don’t know about you but there were times I needed a rebuke from my parents, teachers, friends, pastor, or even from God. When I was a young boy, I had a very nice tutor who gave his heart to help improve my studies for about 3 years until I entered Junior High school. In one of the tests I took, I did poorly. I didn’t want to disappoint him, so I hid the paper. Later when he found out about it, he was very disappointed. He rebuked me not because of my poor grade but because my dishonesty. Strangely enough, I felt his deep love and care and began to trust him even more. Proverbs 27:5 states “Better is open rebuke than hidden love.” However, rebuking someone doesn’t always produce a positive outcome. As a matter of fact, even though the Bible acknowledges the importance of rebuke, it also warns about the risk of rebuking the arrogant (Prov. 9:8).

In today’s passage, before healing the boy with an evil spirit, Jesus rebukes the entire generation of unbelief by saying, “You unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I stay with you and put up with you?” Later in this chapter, we also see Jesus’ rebuking of his disciples due to their pride (9:46-48), intolerance (49-50), and racial prejudice (51-56). It seems that Jesus’ disciples grew mature in faith through his rebuke. This morning let’s think about why Jesus rebuked the people and what kind of attitude we should have when we are rebuked.

As we studied in last week’s passage, the appearance of Jesus’ face suddenly changed as he was praying on the mountain. Also, Moses and Elijah in glorious splendor stood with Jesus, talking about his death in Jerusalem. However, Simon Peter, being mesmerized by the glory, said what he shouldn’t have said that he would build three shelters - one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. It was totally irrelevant to God’s will, exposing his spiritual ignorance. While Peter was still speaking, however, a cloud appeared and covered them and a voice came from the cloud, saying “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him,” (9:35)

Look verse 37. “The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.” Unlike Mark’s account (Mk. 9:14), Luke does not mention about the heated argument between the teachers of the law and the nine disciples. We don’t know exactly what they were arguing about. Luke directly talks about the case of a desperate father whose child had signs of demon-induced seizures.

Look at verses 38-40. “A man in the crowd called out, ‘Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.’” According to the father’s explanation, his only son’s condition was very serious. Whenever the evil spirit seized the boy, he lost his control, screaming and convulsing on the ground while foaming at the mouth. The boy was in danger all the time. The impact of his son’s problem was exhausting day after day. In desperation, the father heard that Jesus’ disciples were able to drive out demons and brought his son to them, begging them to drive the demon out of his son. But they couldn’t. Now, the father turned to Jesus for her, *“Rabbi, look at my son, my only child. Please, do something for my boy.”*

How did Jesus respond? Instead of driving out the demon right away, Jesus lamented over the unbelieving attitude of the people. Look at verse 41. “‘O unbelieving and perverse generation,’ Jesus replied, ‘how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.’” Surely, we can tell that Jesus was angry and frustrated. The expression of his emotions and the tone of his voice are very intense, something similar we see when Jesus was confronted with the Jewish religious leaders as he cleansed the temple. The word “**unbelieving (*apistos*)”** means “unfaithful” or “faithless.” The word “**perverse (*diastrepho*)**” means “make crooked, pervert.”

By the way, do you think that Jesus was angry at the Jewish religious leaders? The crowds, the disciples or the father? What do you think? I think Jesus was referring to all unbelieving people in Israel. It’s surprising to see that Jesus called so called “God’s chosen people Israel” as “unbelieving and perverse generation.” Here, we see that what makes us so unbearable to Jesus is not our human weakness but our chronic unbelief problem.

As a matter of fact, Jesus’ lamentation in verse 41 reminds us of what Moses said about the people of Israel who constantly failed to trust God and disobeyed him. Moses states concerning the people of Israel in Deuteronomy 32:5-6, “They are corrupt and not his children; to their shame they are a warped and crooked generation. Is this the way you repay the Lord, you foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?”

Jesus is God who became a man. From the outset of his ministry, Jesus revealed his divine nature as God through his great teaching of God’s words and by performing many miraculous signs, healing even the most incurable diseases, including leprosy, paralysis and demon-possession. He even raised the dead. He even fed the five thousand people miraculously by multiplying five loaves and two fish. Yet, people failed to trust him. The Jewish religious leaders were offended by Jesus’ teaching and became jealous of Jesus’ popularity. And they attacked him as a blasphemer and tried to get rid of him. Their unbelief problem was very critical.

What about his own disciples who hung around him for almost 3 years, during which time they observed and witnessed every word and activity of their Lord Jesus. Jesus even sent them out to minister to the people by empowering them with the spiritual authority to heal the sick and drive out demons. They experienced Jesus’ divine power and authority. Thankfully, they finally confessed that Jesus was God’s Messiah. However, they still failed to put their complete trust in him. Due to their pride and selfish human ambition, when Jesus left them with only Peter, John and James, their pride was hurt. Instead of remaining in Jesus spiritually, they remained in their pride and selfish ambition. As a result, they were spiritually disconnected from Jesus and became powerless. In fact, they became not only faithless but also perverse, misleading people. The disciples were supposed to be the bridges for the people to come. But they became barriers and hindrances instead due to their unbelieving attitude. At this time, we can see that Jesus was angry particularly at his disciples. So he rebuked them by saying, “How long shall I stay with you and put up with you?”

So what is faith in Jesus? What does it mean to follow Jesus? It means to be connected to Jesus spiritually. Assume that we are electric lamps or refrigerators. Can lamps or refrigerators work by themselves when the plugs are pulled out? Of course not. Faith is our lifeline, being connected to the true source of life, wisdom and power (Pic#1 &2) How can we connected to Jesus always. Jesus said in 9:23, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” We can continue to be connected to Jesus by denying ourselves and taking up the cross and imitating him in every step of our lives.

Paul’s way of saying to have faith in Jesus is explained in many places in his letters. One of them, which is my favorite, is in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Jesus seems to say more clearly about it when he said in John 15:5-6a, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers…” In fact, everyone, regardless who they are, must be connected to Jesus, including the religious leaders, the disciples, the father and the boy. Unless we remain in Jesus, we are like cut branches that will eventually wither and be thrown away. We are like unplugged refrigerators or unplugged lamps. Are you being plugged in Jesus?

After rebuking, Jesus asked the boy to be brought to him so that he could heal him. Look at verse 42. “Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father.” The boy’s symptoms seem like what we call epilepsy today. So, it’s easy for some of us to assume that the boy was not demon-possessed but was suffering from epilepsy, which is a neural dysfunction in the brain. But some epileptic symptoms can be the signs of demon-induced problem even though not all epilepsy is demonic. For sure, the case of the boy in today’s passage is induced by demonic activity, not epilepsy. When Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, the demon left the boy immediately. Even though the disciples and the father didn’t have enough faith, Jesus healed the boy.

Look at verse 43. “And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.” This event again revealed the divine power and authority of Christ Jesus. When we see miraculous works of the Messiah, we are also amazed. As a matter of fact, people tend to seek miracles, fortunes, prosperity as a sign of God’s blessing. I must admit that miracles, fortunes and prosperity are not evil. But we should remember that Jesus is not happy with us when we merely seek fortunes, miracles or prosperity as if it’s God’s will for us to have those things. In other words, Jesus is not happy with it because such attitude is the sign of unbelief. Actually, Jesus lamented by saying in Matthew 12:39, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” I must admit that we, including myself, are being influenced by the sinful tendency of the unbelieving generation in today’s world. We must be careful to hear what Jesus said in today’s passage, “O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I stay with you and put up with you.”

We, as Jesus’ disciples, shouldn’t be fortune seekers. Instead, we should be seekers of God who is the source and foundation of faith even when our situation is unfavorable. Hebrews 11:6 states “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” God is sovereign in all things. Even though we may not fully understand everything that is going on in this world, we should trust that God is sovereign over all things, both good and bad in our eyes. And he works for the ultimate good of his children (Ro. 8:28-30).

Sometimes, God rebukes us for our unbelief through some problems. Yet, we should not be disheartened because we know that God rebukes those whom he loves. Hebrews 12:5b-6 states, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” God rebukes and disciplines us directly or indirectly. But what kind of attitude we have toward God’s rebuke is crucial. God wants our faith to be as refined as pure gold. This kind of faith can provide us with love and peace. And we can even overcome the world and be a blessing and good influence on the people around us.

The world we live in is full of problems and troubles. Life in this world is very stressful. It’s good for us to experience comfort or spiritual power through conferences or retreats on the mountain. But when we have to meet the harsh reality in this world, in our family, schools, working places and society, how we live by faith in Christ is crucial. To remain in Jesus is not easy. But when we remain in Jesus in a true sense, we will not dry out. We will prosper in all we do, as Jesus promise states, “If you remain in me, you will bear much fruit.” According to Mark’s account, when the disciples ask Jesus “Why couldn’t we drive out?”, he replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.” (Mk. 9:29) Yes, prayer is one of the best ways of being connected and empowered by God.

We learn also that the most important aspect of faith is that faith is relational. We should be connected to Christ Jesus through prayer, constant meditation and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. We should always be living in the presence of Him who is not only with us but also in us. To remain in Jesus is not an option. It’s not a small matter. It’s crucial to our day-to-day living. We may plan many good things this year. But no matter what we do, the priority should be to remain in Christ Jesus, and our faith will be rewarded by God.