

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 18 Sep 2022
Sermon Title : Parables of Jesus – Free Us
Speaker : Rev Eddie Ho
Text : Matthew 12: 22-30

INTRODUCTION

Jesus spoke in parables. What is a parable? A Parable is a story or analogy to illustrate or explain a truth or a difficult concept. It need not be a real story, but it is told to evoke and fire up your imagination to get you a connection between the story and your own reality.

And as in the made-up parable (Ps Eddie told in the opening), you realise that sometimes in life what seems huge, intimidating, and fearsome may turn out to be kind and gentle – things are not what it seems. This is what parables aim to do because the world we live in is not as simple as it looks. Jesus uses parables to teach us about the world and the kingdom of God. What it means is whenever Jesus tells us a parable, or when you read God’s Word that record a parable, we can go deeper in search of hidden truths or hidden treasures.

In the sermon scripture text, Jesus healed a demon possessed blind and mute man. The Pharisees claimed that it was only by the force of the prince of demon that Jesus drove the demons out. Jesus shared two parables to show the flawed argument of Pharisees and the truth in the power of the Spirit of God against the evil one.

Parable 1: Parable of divided kingdom (Matthew 12: 22-28)

“Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? If Jesus drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out so that they will be your judges. But if it is by the spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Parable 2: Parable of entering strong man house (Matthew 12: 29-30)

“How can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless hie first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house. Whoever is not with me is against me. Whoever does not gather with me scatters.”

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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Before we can further understand the learnings from the parables, we need to know that there are three worlds in our reality.

The first world: The Physical World

The first world is the physical world. The world we live in, a world in which we rely on our five senses (see, smell, taste, feel, touch) to navigate. This first world is a very beautiful world God created. A world made for our enjoyment.

How is this physical world described in the passage?

In verse 22, someone brought a blind and mute man to Jesus, a man with disabilities. The physical world we live in is beautiful and colourful but the blind man could not see any of this beautiful and colourful sights. He also could not talk. The physical world is also filled with beautiful and caring people like the good people who brought the man to Jesus to be healed but blind and mute man could not see nor talk to them. In many human societies, this blind and mute man might have been discriminated by other people in this world because of his disabilities. In other words, the world we live in may be beautiful, but it is also broken. Not everyone can enjoy it and not everyone in this world is good and kind.

The second world: The Spiritual World

The passage also tells us there is a second world. This second world is a world we cannot see. Verse 22 says that the blind and mute man is demon possessed. In verse 24, the Pharisees said that Jesus was a servant of Beelzebul, the prince of demons and then in versus 26, Jesus himself eludes Beelzebul and Satan out of the same kind in the spiritual world of darkness. These 3 verses described that in addition to our physical world, there is a spiritual world that we cannot see. A world where there are demons and the evil spiritual forces of Satan at work. Some of you may not be aware or believe that there is a spiritual world because you do not see, hear, feel it. What you do not see, does not mean it does not exist. Things are not always what it seems. The second world is a spiritual world that many cannot see.

Pastor shared a testimony of his encounter with the demon-possessed man his ministry work.

Ephesians 6:12 tells us that our struggle is not just against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil of the spiritual world.

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Demons and evil spirits are real and not being able to see them does not mean that they do not exist, just as we may not see the Milky Way in Singapore, but the Milky Way exists.

The third world: The World of your own

The third world is the world in our head.

After seeing Jesus heal the man physically and spiritually by driving out the demon, the Pharisees refused to give credit to God. Instead, they chose to believe that Jesus did it by the power of demons. They could clearly see what Jesus had done in the physical world but they did not recognise the right spiritual force behind that action.

Why were they not able to recognise the right spiritual power?

It is because they were trapped in the third world, “the world of their own”. This is what the first parable is trying to refute. It may be called the parable of the divided Kingdom but the under-current of this parable is to address all of us who may be trapped in our own world.

Verse 25 shows that Jesus knew the Pharisees’ thoughts and reasoned with their flawed argument. Jesus pointed out to them that Satan will not fight against himself and have his world divided. So, it proved that the Pharisees were blind (trapped in their own world) to not able to recognise the truth.

But we should not be surprised that the Pharisees were trapped in their own world. That is what Satan is good at in trapping us, deceiving us and binding us in our own world such that we cannot see the reality in the spiritual world. We know that the Pharisees continue to live in their own world as they proceeded on to plot against Jesus.

Reflections – Trapped in our own world

1. What is the situation you are currently in?

- Many of us may be trapped in our own world. Some of us are trapped because of our past experiences. Something happened in your life, and you think that is the way things work. It could be a bad experience. You may be hurt by someone in the church. You think that it is normal, nobody including the church is to be trusted.

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- The past experience could also even be a good experience. God has touched you in a certain way in the past or you have been in ministry in certain way. You thought God could only touch you in that certain way and you fight to keep that old certain way without realising that the situation and contexts had changed.

For example, God may have spoken to you through someone whom God has gifted with the word of knowledge and prophesied over you and gave you a word of healing. Because of that supernatural experience, you think that is the only way God speaks to you and thus you hang on only to that way.

But the truth is far from it. God speaks to us in many ways. Ultimately, God speaks through the word of God. No prophecy can contradict the scriptures. The scriptures tell us who God is and what his heart is like.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 tell us that the Scripture is God's word which is good and sufficient for teaching, reproof, correction, for training in righteousness and equipping us for good work.

- The world is under Satan's power and Satan is at work (1 John 5:19; 2 Corinthians 4:4) in trapping us in our own world. He is holding us as hostages. He is blinding us to see God's spiritual truth and to live in a world of our own.

The only way is to defeat Satan, the strong man first. This is the reason Jesus came. Jesus came to tie up the devil, the strong man and to render the evil "toothless". The ropes on our hands as hostages have been untied because Christ has paid the price on cross. The ransom has been paid. Jesus came to free us from the blindness of our heart, to free us from the bondage of power of this world which traps us in our own world.

2. This understanding that Jesus already untied the rope on our hands is what we as Methodist called the prevenient grace of God. It means that God's grace is given before we decide to follow Christ. This grace is for everyone including the non-Christians. We are free to choose to remain as a hostage or to be free as a child of God.

- All we have to do is to have faith in Jesus, to remove the rope that has been untied from our hands and we will be free. Unfortunately, some of us are too used to be being tied up and living as if we are bound, even though the ropes on our hands have been untied.

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- This is why we are called to evangelise. Jesus gave us the Great Commission for us to tell the Good News, to make disciples of all nations. We need to tell people of the good news that the ropes have already been untied. Have faith in Jesus to remove the rope. It is not easy as Satan is still in this world. Satan may be bound, he may be toothless, but his mouth is not gagged. He can still speak, shout, and plant ideas in our mind. He can still trap us in our own world.

3. Are you living in your own world?

- Are you still bound by your old belief?
- Are you still bound by your old ways of doing things?
- Are you living life in the framework of past bad experiences, or even good experiences that limit the ways God wants to work in your life?

Holy Spirit – spot light on your life

Last week's sermon talked about different types of lights. The Holy Spirit will shine a spotlight on specific areas of your life that you have not yet surrendered. It may be a relationship that you may need to repair. It may be a hidden sin that you need to repent. It may even be the old way of doing Ministry or that is holding on to you that prevent you from seeing the heart of God.

- a. Will you ask God to shine that spotlight on your physical and spiritual life and set you free from your own world?
- b. If you have not given your life to Jesus yet, the Holy Spirit wants to shine a flood light on your life.
- c. If you need forgiveness, the blood of Christ has cleansed you.
- d. If you need healing, God wants to heal and restore you. God wants to fill the void in your soul. Would allow the Holy Spirit to flood your soul,

God wants to give you a life beyond what you can imagine. Your freedom has been bought. What you have to do is to have faith in Jesus Christ to remove the ropes on your hands, and you will be free.

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Conclusion

Things are not what it seems. The spiritual world exists though many cannot see. The physical world is under the power of Satan. Satan is good at trapping us in the “world of our own” in our mind. As a result, we judge, oppose and deny the facts and God’s truth. We think that our opinions and the way of doing things is better.

We are set free from this bondage because Jesus has sacrificed Himself for us to break this bondage by binding the hands of Satan. We will need to trust in Jesus and remove the ropes that were untied from our hands. Unfortunately, some of us still live as if we are still bounded. Have faith in Jesus and follow his ways. May we allow the Holy Spirit to spot light the area we need to surrender. Pray for God to

- Open our eyes so that we will not be blind.
- Open our ears, so that we can hear God clearly.
- Open our hearts to commune with God
- To free us from world of our own
- To embrace the freedom that Jesus has set us free

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As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

Appoint someone to Matthew 12:22-30 twice, slowly.

1. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?
2. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?
3. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, 'This is the Word of the Lord.'

All to respond. "Thanks be to God". Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now.

a. As God's word was read, which verse speaks to you the most?

b. (i) What is one key takeaway for you from the sermon?

(ii) How will you align the way you live to your key take?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation

4. Things are not what it seems. Share your reflections on how the physical world, spiritual world and “world of our own” relates to you.

5. Knowing that we are trapped in “our own world”. What areas/specific request you would ask God to free you?

b. What is one action that you commit to do?

c. As a group, how can the group come together and support each other in living God's word for each of us and growing in maturity?

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C. Testimonies, Action and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

6. Share your testimony on how you have experienced, through God's grace and love, overcoming your own fears and transformation.

OR

Give thanks to God for helping you in the challenges and difficult conditions, and transformation.

7. With your prayer partner, take time to pray for the concerns in 3(a) and 3(b) above, submitting to Him your fears, your challenges and difficult conditions in living out the Great Commission.

As a group, pray also for the Holy Spirit to be upon your group and the church so that you can come together to grow in maturity.

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