

HERE IS MY SERVANT  
(A Bruised Reed He Will Not Break)

Matthew 12:9-21

Key Verse: 12:18

“Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight;  
I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.”

Greetings, dear brothers and sisters in Hungary! We give thanks to God for the privilege of worshiping Jesus with you. In today’s passage Jesus heals a man with a shriveled hand. In doing so, he fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy about God’s Servant. This prophecy teaches us the character of Jesus so that we may have confidence to come to him. Many people know they have inner wounds that need healing. But sometimes we feel too vulnerable to expose these things. When we do not expose them, they fester and get worse. Jesus wants us to know that we can trust him and come to him without fear or shame. Jesus heals us. May Jesus’ healing touch come upon us all today.

We can divide this passage into two parts. Verses 9-13 tell of Jesus healing a man with a shriveled hand. It is “Jesus in action”—a factual account. Verses 15-21 are mainly about the prophecy of Isaiah, who foretold the Messiah’s healing ministry. This prophecy testifies to Jesus’ identity and character as the Messiah. Taken as a whole, this passage gives us confidence to come to Jesus who heals us.

First, “Stretch out your hand” (9-13). During this time in his earthly ministry, Jesus healed many sick people and drove out demons by the power of God. However, he was increasingly attacked by the Jewish religious leaders. They did not accept him because he seemed to threaten their honorable positions and income source. After a confrontation with them in a field, Jesus went into a synagogue to worship on the Sabbath. A man with a shriveled hand was there. It was a debilitating condition. With a shriveled hand, a person cannot function well. His texting speed would be very slow. By the time he finished his text, and was ready to press “send,” it would be too late to be relevant. Even if he was handsome, people only remembered his crippled condition. His job opportunities would be very limited, as would his marriage possibilities. It must have been so frustrating and painful. How easy it would be to entertain the devil’s taunts and fall into fatalism. There must have been many days when he was a nervous wreck. Yet this man entered the synagogue on the Sabbath to seek God and honor God. He should have been encouraged by the religious leaders. Instead, they used him as bait in their trap to catch Jesus. They asked Jesus, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” The implication was that if he did, they would accuse him of breaking the Sabbath—a very serious offense in the Jewish law.

In verses 11-13 we see how Jesus responded. He was not intimidated by the religious leaders' pressure. Nor was he caught by their trap. Rather, he exhibited wisdom, love and the power of God. First, he said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." To people in that region and time, sheep were quite valuable—young lambs sold for 90,000-140,000 forint or \$250-400 today. The religious leaders would rescue their valuable sheep without hesitation, even on the Sabbath. Their own actions testified that their dogged legalism could not be applied absolutely. In essence, they were hypocrites. Jesus went on to declare that people are much more valuable than sheep. People are made in the image of God as immortal souls. Jesus taught us that one person's life is more valuable than all the treasures of the world. Therefore restoring one person's life is lawful, even on the Sabbath.

It is easy to judge the Jewish leaders. But we should realize that the tendency toward legalism is always present in a ministry or an organization, especially as it matures. To overcome this tendency, we must value each person's life like Jesus does. Valuing one person has been a primary practice in our UBF ministry. The late Dr. Samuel Lee always loved one person sacrificially in the midst of bearing his heavy responsibility as a leader. At times his irrational love for one person was hard for others to understand. It was also often taken for granted. But God blessed him and raised influential spiritual leaders: P. Mark Vucekovich, Dr. Helen Rarick, Yvonne Lee, and many others. Many of the UBF ministries I have visited were established through the changed life of one person who was loved and served sacrificially by a missionary. As we follow Jesus, we should value one person as most precious.

When Jesus valued one person, he was willing to take a great risk in order to help him. Jesus knew the religious leaders were going to accuse and condemn him. But Jesus did not hesitate. Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So the man stretched out his hand, and it was completely restored (13). Jesus healed him, no matter the cost. When the Pharisees saw this, they should have repented and decided to become shepherds for one person instead of religious politicians. But they did not. They went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Let's think more about how Jesus healed this man. Jesus knew it was not easy for the man to stretch out his hand. The atmosphere of the synagogue was tense. The man must have been ashamed of his weakness. Yet Jesus commanded him to stretch out his hand. How could the man do so? By faith in Jesus. When he heard Jesus' words, he knew the good Shepherd was talking to him. He felt Jesus' love and desire to do good for him. He trusted Jesus. Faith gave him power to stretch out his hand. As he did, something began to happen. His muscles, skin, bones and his entire hand were infused with a new energy and power that totally healed him. His hand became normal. In an instant his life

problem was solved. He felt like a whole human being. His shameful weakness was gone. He could do all the things he never had the ability to do in the past. He received a new life with a bright future from Jesus simply by trusting his words.

As he did for this man, Jesus heals people in our times too. Sometimes he heals people's bodies. Many times he heals their souls. I have always been a pretty healthy and strong person physically, but my soul was shriveled by the power of sin. Though I have a bright mind and talents, I could not use them freely because of fear in my heart, especially fear of failure and fear of rejection. So I hid my talents. The late Dr. Samuel Lee discovered this and helped me with the parable of the talents. He rebuked me not to hide my talents but to use them boldly and courageously for the work of God. He challenged me to do the very things I was afraid of by faith in God. Once my Bible student's father attacked me with a baseball bat. I was traumatized. Dr. Lee prayed for me to give my life for the glory of God and sent me to Rome to visit the catacombs. Seeing how the early Christians gave their lives for Jesus and the gospel inspired me. After about one year, God healed my inner fear. I became a man of courageous faith. Now I challenge many hardships and difficulties by having faith in God. All of us have some kind of shriveled hand. Let's stretch out our hands to Jesus by faith so he may heal us.

Second, "a bruised reed he will not break" (14-21). After hearing of the threats of the religious leaders, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. There was no disease or sickness that Jesus could not heal. Jesus can heal us from anything. What was the purpose of Jesus' healing ministry?

Look at verse 17: "This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah..." Jesus' healing ministry was the fulfillment of prophecy. These prophecies were made by God hundreds of years before Jesus came. Only the Eternal God, the Sovereign Ruler of history could make and fulfill these prophecies. Jesus' healing ministry reveals God's sovereign grace to mankind. Jesus' healing ministry shows us that God is carrying out a plan of salvation. Why would God do this? It is because God loves humankind he has created. It was not God's fault that we sinned and lost paradise. It was not God's fault that we had to live in a world under curse. It is precisely the punishment that our sins deserve. But God is merciful. God made a plan to restore our love relationship with him. Jesus' healing ministry expresses God's love for us. God sent Jesus to heal and save us. It is undeserved, but this is what God has done by his grace. Praise God!

In verses 18-21 we find the prophecy of Isaiah. It reveals to us who Jesus really is. In verse 18a, God speaks: "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight." The Messiah is first of all God's servant. He honors God, listens to God and obeys God. His purpose and desire is to please God. He loves God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength. And God loves him with perfect, unbroken consistency. They are never separate. They never misunderstand each other. God delights in his servant. The

servant is Jesus. Jesus' life, power, love, and ministry flowed out of a perfect love relationship with the Father God. So Jesus could say that he and the Father are one. When we see Jesus, we see God's perfect servant. There have been many great men of God in history, such as Abraham, Moses, David, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul and more. There have been many great women of God: Sarah, Rebekah, Deborah, Hannah, Esther, Ruth, Mary and more. But only Jesus is the perfect servant who always did what pleased God. Isaiah's words, "Here is my servant" challenge us to turn our eyes away from all others and to behold Jesus, the perfect servant of God.

Verse 18b says, "I will put my Spirit on him, and he will declare justice to the nations." The Father God is pleased to let his Spirit dwell in Jesus. The Spirit is God himself: holy, righteous, powerful, loving, kind, gentle, and just. He cannot tolerate sin, evil, wickedness or unrighteousness. He empowers the servant to challenge injustice with power that checks and exposes the darkness. He is strong enough to defeat evil in any form. He is also loving enough to embrace and lift up those suffering from injustice. His authority applies not only to individual people, but toward the nations. He can stand against national rulers who wage war for personal gain. He can break down evil organized networks that deal in human trafficking. He can break the Internet, nullify nuclear weapons, and depose any kind of evil leader. His message of justice to the nations is backed by his almighty power and perfect wisdom.

People suffer so much from injustice in the world. During international monetary crises, a few privileged people become more wealthy while many people lose their means of survival. Though the powerless suffer so much, there is no remedy for them in the courts, which side with the privileged. Missionaries who come from the East to the West often confront discriminatory bias, especially if they cannot speak the native language well. They go through many kinds of injustice. Though they are qualified for good jobs, preference is given to native people. Though they exert more time and effort than others in their workplace, they receive less compensation. Of course, they bear these things silently. They are committed to taking up Jesus' cross, no matter the cost. Still, our hearts can hurt. Anyone suffering injustice: look at the servant of the Lord. With his power, wisdom, love and justice, he will bring perfect justice to all. When we are suffering from injustice, let's cry out to Jesus, who can really help us.

In verses 19-20 we can learn the character of the servant: "He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory." The servant does not rely on violent political action or exercise harsh military power. His work is done through words that carry God's own love which heals and strengthens the weak. Some people are like bruised reeds. They have wounds that cause them deep pain and anguish and distort their character. They cannot be healed by rational ideas or coercion, educational programs, drugs or other means. Rather, such methods may cause them more

harm. But the Servant's words can heal them. The Servant embraces them with full understanding, assures them of his love, and brings real healing to their wounded souls. Some people are like smoldering wicks. The light of life is almost gone from within them. They have no passion, no strength, and they want to give up on life. They are so vulnerable that any harsh word can extinguish the flickering light within them. The Servant's words are so gentle that they feel no threat. Rather, they receive new life and power that makes their light shine again. A new life and a new passion awaken within them. They can sing, "This little light, I'm gonna let it shine." They can become the light of the world.

Isaiah's prophecy concludes with the words, "In his name the nations will put their hope." Though God introduced Jesus as the Messiah in Israel, he came for the people of all nations. He came to bring all kinds of wounded people and vulnerable people back to God. He came to restore God's reign over persons and over nations and to establish the kingdom of God. While we live in this world, we go through many difficulties and challenges. But we can have hope. Let's put our hope in Jesus, the hope of the nations, and find healing and restoration in him—for ourselves, for our sheep, for our nation, for this world.