

## **012322 Sermon "The Year of Lord's Favor" Luke 4:14-21**

Please understand that today, sharing with you what has happened to me over the past month is a large part of my sermon.

I returned to the parsonage after 1 o'clock Faith Circle Sunday service on December 12, and in the evening my hands and feet started to limp a little. And when I woke up on Monday morning, I was feeling sluggish and especially unable to speak. It was as if the tongue and lips were anesthetized and not released. "Weird... This is the first time this has happened, is it because I am tired?" After thinking about it, I lay down and rest for a while, but there was no sign of improvement. When I asked doctors from among my acquaintances, they told me that if it is clear that I have slurred speech, I need to go to the emergency department as soon as possible because there may be a problem with my brain. So, I went to the emergency room of Saint Vincent Hospital, which is closest to the parsonage. And although she was on vacation at the time, I thought it would be a good idea to go to the hospital where Grace Kim is a doctor. I couldn't speak well, had numbness in my hands and feet, had dizziness, and that it was very uncomfortable to walk alone, so they started a stroke test right away.

Contrast CT scans and general CT scans were performed on the head and neck, and MRI scans were performed. But the result is that my brain is clean. After all, it's not really a stroke, but they still don't know what the cause is, so I was told if my symptoms worsen, come back to the emergency room, and that's how I was discharged. There were no neurologists at the hospital at the time.

I woke up on Tuesday morning, and I felt my body getting more dull. My wife and I walked around the church parking lot a bit, but it was definitely harder to walk than on Monday. On Wednesday morning, my body became a little more sluggish, and it was starting to get a little harder to breathe.

I saw a neurologist in Stratford on Wednesday morning, and the doctor said he didn't know the cause... Then he said let's do an electrical test just in case, but it's full by the end of the year, so I wait until the end of the year and wait until the test results come out which takes about 3 weeks. The condition is getting worse and worse, and until then, the cause is still unknown.

But what I am very grateful for is that when I was ministering in New Haven, among the church members, there was a 6th year Yale medical student in MD Phd program. The young man was supposed to visit South Korea if the original plan went according to plan, but that schedule was canceled, and in the meantime, he heard that my health condition was bad. Then he was with me from the emergency room on Monday evening to the neurologist on Wednesday morning.

Then he consulted with the professor of Yale Medical School, and he said that it would be better to go to the emergency room of Yale Hospital as soon as possible. That young man took care of the whole process until late Wednesday night. \*The reason for these difficulties is still unknown (honestly, I don't know), but looking back, there were not only difficulties, but Jehovah-jireh, that is, God's help and preparation were clearly present together.

So I was admitted to the emergency room at Yale University Hospital, and after seeing my symptoms, they did several tests, and they said it was like Miller Fisher Syndrome among Guillain-Barré syndrome. It was a disease I had never heard of before, but to put it simply, this is a rare disease, which is a kind of autoimmune disease, in which my body's immune system attacks the peripheral nervous system of my body, which gradually paralyzes my body.

Starting from the feet and eyes, the symptoms of paralysis gradually spread throughout the body, and when the lungs and heart are paralyzed, it is a

disease that can lead to coma or death. From Wednesday, when I swallowed water, it kept coming down my nose, so they told me not to eat anything all day.

My legs were getting weaker and it was difficult to even walk alone. They did various tests, so on Wednesday evening they drew the spinal fluid and did a test, convinced that it was GBS from the test results and my symptoms, and started prescribing IVIg late at night. This should be administered in 5 divided doses for 5 days, and the lung capacity is checked every 4 hours, and blood tests were repeated every day.

My headache was getting worse, my eyes were getting weird, I couldn't read a book, I couldn't look at my phone, and I couldn't close my eyes completely. I closed my eyes best I could and prayed quietly, or thought about this and that. I'm a pastor who has to preach the word of God, but since I couldn't speak, the thought that my life as a pastor could end like this ran through my head. By the way, the sermon I gave on December 12 suddenly came to mind, and it was about rejoicing in the Lord.

I asked myself. I am in the hospital now, lying in bed, can I rejoice in the Lord even at this moment? This is how I prayed and confessed to the Lord. "Lord, even though I am lying in the hospital, I believe I am still in you. Please have mercy on me." I am holding on to that belief, and what I was grateful for was that even if I died, I was not afraid of death. Dear beloved, I take on the role of preaching the word of God to you as a pastor. However, even though I myself always feel lacking, I do not give up, I try to keep my heart in check and stand in front of the word of God first. So, don't give up on yourself, and continue to build yourself up before the word of God, and continue to cultivate your heart's field before the word of God.

I was hospitalized for the first time in my life for 5 days and was discharged with barely able to walk on my own. The condition seemed to get better little

by little every day, but after 3 days from the hospital, the right facial muscle paralysis started, and after a few days, the left facial muscle also became paralyzed. I still couldn't speak properly because I couldn't move my facial muscles, and it was hard to eat. Thankfully, my taste came back, but at that time, eating was the hardest. Fortunately, my jaw was movable, so I chewed food with my jaw and pressed my cheeks with my two hands to eat. It was the first time I realized that each facial muscle was playing such an important role in eating. I couldn't even speak properly until just two weeks ago, but being able to stand before you again and testify of God's word is a miracle in itself and all of this is God's grace.

There are many elderly people in our congregation, so I often visit the hospital and nursing homes. I am cautiously thinking about whether God has a special will to empathize and love you more through this opportunity.

Today's reading in the Gospel of Luke is a "mission statement" of Jesus as he began his public ministry. As verse 17 tells us, he quoted Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus came to proclaim "the year of Lord's favor." The Bible uses the term "year of jubilee" interchangeably.

The "year of jubilee" is defined in the dictionary as the following: the 50<sup>th</sup> year that arrives after 7 sabbaticals, or the *year of freedom and liberation* that comes every 50 years. Yobel is a type of instrument similar to a trumpet, which is played on the Day of Repentance during the 50<sup>th</sup> year, informing people that the year has come. Thus, the "year of jubilee" was also known as "the year of Yobel." (See Leviticus 25, Numbers 36).

For the Jews, the year of jubilee is a year of rest during which all land, wealth, and people are liberated. All debt is cancelled, all land held as collateral is freed, and all slaves are liberated. Jesus brings the ultimate year of jubilee.

Isaiah 61:2 actually reads "to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn." But Jesus in Luke 4 only proclaimed the year of favor, and not vengeance – because the day of vengeance is reserved for His Second Coming.

Paul the Apostle says in 2 Corinthians 6:2: "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." This moment that we live is also a season of God's favor and salvation. Are you living this freedom from sin and death that God has granted us through the blood of Jesus Christ?

Jesus came to "proclaim freedom to the prisoners." The gospel is the same proclamation of freedom that was sent to the Israelites who had been enslaved by Egypt and Babylon. Through Jesus' death on the cross, we are freed from the power of sin and death. Do you know what that means – the power of forgiveness? We must constantly ask ourselves: am I living by the power and the freedom of the cross of Jesus Christ today?

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, there is a saying that "When the Sunday church service ends, your worship service for the week begins." What we ought to fear is not the constant turmoil that plagues our day-to-day life, but not walking with the Lord. (I do not know why it was happening to me but I know how to react, how to live as a Christian.) I pray that we all live out the blessings of the gospel, freedom from sin and death thru the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I encourage us all to transform each day through the word of God, reflecting ourselves on the mirror of God. Let us pray that our spiritual life is not dry nor cold-hearted, but that there is a constant stream of everlasting life in us, enriching our lives; by the grace of Jesus, we need to be renewed each day and everyday, sharing this stream of life with others consistently. Fairfield Grace, May God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.