

My Son and the Rooster

Kayo Tanaka

The time of new meetings and separation has returned with cherry blossoms again. Around the time of the shower of cherry blossoms, there was a farewell ceremony for the faculty leaving my son's elementary school.

My son Jun's homeroom teacher was to be transferred to another school. She had taken care of him in a special education class for special needs children ever since he transferred to this school two years ago. In her speech, she said:

"I'd like to tell you one more story. I have been at this elementary school for nine years. When I came to this school, there was an animal already here. Do you know what that is? It is the big rooster. I heard that one of the pupils of this school found him deserted in a park and brought him to feed. But he didn't trust people at all. And he was very fierce attacking anyone who tried to be close to him with his bill. The reason could be that he was mistreated and deserted. Teachers and students had a hard time feeding him or cleaning up his coop. Everyone was afraid of him, and finally no one approached him unless it was necessary. However, he was changed by one person. It was Jun."

"After Jun transferred to this school, one day I took him to the coop to see the rooster. I was a little worried when I unlocked the door, but Jun was not at all afraid. To my great surprise, he entered the coop, and held the big and vicious rooster tightly with his arms without any hesitation. Then Jun went to see the rooster almost every day. He hugged him, pulled his wings and crest, and touched his bill, but the rooster became tame and let Jun do whatever he wanted. Finally the rooster stopped attacking anyone approaching him."

"Is there anyone among you who is rough and bullies others? If you approach a person with a warm heart, your heart may be transmitted to him without saying a word, and he can become a kind person, too. I am so grateful that I taught at this school and met such a nice friend in this class."

I was surprised that she mentioned my son's name in front of all the students. At the same time I was touched because of her attitude to make every effort to help others to understand Jun who cannot express himself very well. And I gave thanks to the Lord who gave my son such a sensitive teacher with a heart of understanding and respecting children.

However, that was not everything. I felt that some kind of impression

beyond a personal episode of my son quietly permeated throughout the auditorium. Every mother was shedding tears. I was also overwhelmed with the love of Jesus filling the place and I could not keep back my tears.

The rooster was so deeply wounded that his only reaction was attacking people. But he was actually starving for people's affections. He was left alone in a corner of the noisy playground. He was scared, ignored, and forgotten by people. Both the children and the adults there must have felt the pain and loneliness of the rooster.

We all have experienced being hurt. We have had moments when we got so hurt and hid ourselves in a shell. No one wants to be either offensive or violent. No one likes to be disliked and left alone. Even when we say, "I cannot trust anyone anymore," we are waiting for someone we can trust. We are longing for someone who understands our loneliness, heals our heartaches and encourages us by saying, "It's alright." We are eager for someone who keeps pouring out his warm love on our broken hearts like a shower until we can have the courage once again to come out of the shell and step outside.

Oh, Rooster, you had waited for such a person for more than seven years! Seven years are really long. Jun may have sensed the rooster's loneliness and sorrow, and naturally heard his heart's cry seeking for love. Jun boldly went up to him and held him tight with his arms without a fear of his appearance. Then Jun comforted and softened little by little the vulnerable heart of the rooster so that he would have the courage to trust people again. If this is not a healing, what is the healing?

Around that time, Jun had just transferred to this school and was having a hard time in adjusting himself to new circumstances. Jun never spoke out his loneliness, but having being accepted by the rooster, Jun was also healed. I heard from his teacher that whenever Jun was tired, he went to see the rooster. So I occasionally went to the coop and greeted the rooster, saying, "Thank you for encouraging my son," but I never knew there was such a story behind the whole scene. Now children who know nothing about the rooster which used to be so vicious visit the coop frequently, feed him and enjoy playing with him.

After the farewell ceremony, on our way home from school, an unfamiliar second-grader boy came to us and said, "Today I heard about Jun from a teacher. I was so moved. I almost cried. Good-bye!" I felt the Lord was actually working among us.

At the end of the last school year, in a parent-teacher conference, the homeroom teacher of the regular class said to us, "The children of this class all grew up to be kind-hearted, thanks to Jun. Jun shared so much

kindness with everyone that each child became kind. They were blessed.” Another teacher for the special needs children, who had difficulty dealing with Jun, mentioned in Jun’s introduction: “Jun is very warm-hearted. When he sees someone in trouble, he silently goes close to him and shares his sorrow. Just being with him, you will feel warm.”

Certainly, the Lord has called us to this town. And the Lord has revealed His love so abundantly through Jun, who is probably never regarded as a capable child according to the standard of this world. As I thought about it, I was so encouraged.

Whenever thinking of that rooster, I am overwhelmed anew by the ultimate love of Jesus. I have had many worries and doubts lately, but I was once again brought back to my starting point. There are people who are too hurt to allow anyone to come close to them. They are very protective like a hedgehog ruffling needles on its body. The Lord embraces those people tightly without hesitation even if He is pierced by the needles and sheds His blood. Sorrow, anger, despair, loneliness, regret and everything else are all covered with the love of the cross. Even death is swallowed up by it and His victory is revealed. The Lord never gives up on loving us. Nothing is more powerful and beautiful than His Love. This love is flowing out of my son, me, and everyone believing in the Lord.

There are a lot of people who are never open to others and urgently waiting for the Lord’s salvation in solitudes. The Lord having mercy on even one rooster never fails to save and embrace them in His love.

I felt that the joy of the rooster who was set free from the bondage by the love of the Lord quietly permeated and wrapped the entire school at that moment.

May 5, 2007