

Sunday, August 30th Mark 7:31-37

Has this ever happened to you? You took a plane trip, and your luggage did not catch up with you until you returned home? You purchased a major appliance, and it self-destructed the day after the warranty expired? Whenever you go through some frustration like this, it makes you skeptical whether you can count on anything to do anything well these days. In the gospel for today we receive a comforting assurance, **“You Can Count on Jesus – He has done everything well!”**

Some people brought to Jesus a man who was deaf and could hardly talk. Since no one is unimportant to Jesus, He took the deaf man off by himself. He put his fingers into the man’s ears and touched the man’s tongue. He looked up to heaven to make the man aware that the gift of hearing and speech was going to come through Jesus, the Son of God. He sighed deeply, for indeed our human ailments and sorrows touch His compassionate heart. Then with a word, “Ephatha!,” which means “Be opened,” the man could hear perfectly and speak plainly. The people, overwhelmed by this amazing miracle, exclaimed, “He has done everything well!”

They were not simply flattering Jesus. They marveled when they saw the personal, reassuring intimate touch Jesus gave to their friend. And the ability to perform a supernatural healing – can only be due to God’s great power! What is said of God the Father when He created all things and it was all very good, now is said of God the Son, “He has done everything well!”

Can we not also count on Him who has done everything well? That same compassion, understanding, and power that brought healing to the man in our lesson still describes the way Jesus meets our needs today. He sends the blessing of health and says, “Don’t just take your health for granted and enjoy it. *Appreciate Me* for all the health you have. He sends the blessing of money to buy food and clothing and says, “*Love Me* not the money.” Jesus sends loved ones, family and friends and says, *Love Me* for them.”

But what about my pain, sorrow, and hardship? How often don’t you have doubts when others around you seem so happy, healthy, and successful, and you seem so miserable, lonely, and a failure? Indeed, we all think how wonderful it would be if we could get the instant cure like the man in our reading. But if you had the choice between not suffering and going to hell, and suffering and going to heaven, which would you choose? It may be against common sense to think of physical and mental problems as a blessing, but then remember Jesus does everything well – even when it means going against what our common sense tells us or what feels good for the moment.

You see, in a world cursed by the fall into sin and the death that sin brought to God’s beautiful creation, the Lord uses every means, even our problems to coax us back to him. Whenever He allows what seems apparently so wrong into our lives, He still promises to overrule and work out all for good. He sends the blessings of sickness or hardship and says, “Still love and appreciate Me. I have prepared a home in heaven for you where there will be no sickness or sorrow! Maybe the riches, success, or good health were bad for you since your heart would have worshiped them.” Regardless, in suffering we learn not to trust in our own pride and strength, but in God’s grace alone to sustain us in our suffering. We are blessed even when we mourn, for God’s Spirit comforts us and we know God’s love in an even deeper, more intimate way than ever before as we long for our heavenly home and trust in Christ, the Way by which we will enter heaven!”

Oh, but how can this really be true? What assurance do we have that He really does do everything well? At the beginning of Jesus' ministry at His baptism the Father Himself said, "This is my Son, whom I love. With Him I am well pleased." At the closing part of Jesus' ministry on the Mount of Transfiguration the Father said the exact same thing – and added, "Listen to Him!" (Matthew 3 & 17). Jesus came to heal us of our most fatal disease, sin. Sin separated us from God. Sin made us deaf to God's voice. If you took God's voice, His warnings, His promises, His comfort and His direction from your life and what would be left? No matter how well you lived, eventually you will die – and then face an eternity of fear, regret, sorrow and loneliness, cut off from God forever in hell. The problems of this life, brought into God's perfect world by human sin, are but symptoms of an even greater sorrow that will befall everyone who doesn't do everything well, who fails to love God perfectly and do all things perfectly according to His commandments.

But God, who loves us with an everlasting love, sent His perfect Son to do everything well in our place. He earned a perfect holiness that God credits to us for Jesus' sake. He won the forgiveness of all our sins at Calvary where He poured out His life-blood as full payment for all our sin. Whoever we are, whatever we have done, however guilty we feel, we can be absolutely certain that Christ lived, died, and rose for us. The forgiveness of sins and eternal life He offers us and gives us is just right for us, for Jesus has done everything well!

Sin would make us deaf to the Lord's voice in the Gospel, but Jesus in His grace has spoken His "Ephatha!" to open our ears to hear the angelic song over the fields of Bethlehem, to hear His "It is finished!" spoken from the cross, to hear His word of assurance, "Because I live, you also shall live."

So now when Jesus says, "Search the Scriptures," don't you want to dig into God's Word to grow in faith in Jesus, to rejoice in salvation and to receive His direction for your life? When He says, "All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ," don't you want to remember your baptismal grace every day – and daily repent of the sins of the old self and live each day anew in childlike faith in Jesus? When He says, "Do this in remembrance of me," don't you want to participate in the Lord's Supper at every opportunity, knowing Jesus gives you His body and blood to forgive you and strengthen your faith? When He says, "If you love me, you will obey what I command," don't you want to gladly live by the Ten Commandments to show your love for Jesus? When He says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you," don't you want to repent of bitterness and quarreling and demonstrate Christ's love and forgiveness to others? When he says, "Pray continuously," don't you want to regularly and daily talk with Him, bringing your needs, prayers for others, and praise? When He says, "Go and make disciples of all nations," don't you want to gladly speak God's Word and support mission efforts with your prayers and offerings? Yes, we live to testify to Christ's glory, and we serve Him in His kingdom because we know and because we want others to know that Jesus has done everything well!