

*“The Message of a Miracle of Our Lord”*

Mark 7:36

Rev. Robert W. Schaibley, Pastor

From the Holy Gospel: And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. And Jesus commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it. [Mark 7.35-36]

**Today is the 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity, known as “Ephphatha, Be Opened Sunday,” on the basis of the Holy Gospel for the day, from Mark, chapter 7. We like miracles. They make happy faces out of sad faces. They bring relief. For many, the nicest thing about a miracle is that it shows that God loves you, that God in His heavens looks down, hears your prayers, and He answers them. In other words, the nice thing about miracles is that they show you that God cares.**

**But the absence of a desired miracle doesn’t deny that God cares. God cares on the basis of His judgments, not yours, and in that is the frustration for people of faith. So, you pray for your miracle “if it by Thy will.” But even then, the heart hopes that it will,**

**indeed, be God’s will, with that same sort of hope that is found in an amateur gambler at a casino who is about to roll the dice, in a desperate need of cash to solve some problem or pay for some cure. So it is that gamblers gamble with dice and those who pray often find themselves gambling with prayer. It is great when the prayers seem to be answered. But its another story when prayers are not answered, so that we can understand things better when they are.**

**I.**

**Consider the Holy Gospel of the Day. Jesus performs yet another miracle, but to get the point of this miracle, you have to get it in the proper context. When we join His journey things morning, by the miracle of the Word of God, He is leaving Tyre and Sidon and traveling through the so-called region of the Decapolis – or, the region of the “ten**

**cities,” through which He arrives at the Sea of Galilee on the eastern shore, the shore opposite of the region of Galilee.**

**Now, to understand the fullness of our Lord’s movements and actions, you must consider how it was that He was in the region of Tyre and Sidon, the land we today call Lebanon. He was in that Gentile territory because He has “given up” on the Galileans, so to speak. His shows His recognition of their stubborn unbelief by taking elsewhere His road-show of the forgiveness of sins. And after miracles in Lebanon, He now arrives in the Gentile, pagan region of the Decapolis.**

**Will these pagans believe, when presented with the Word of God, both in proclamation and in the person of Jesus the Christ? You know the answer! “They brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand upon him.” They begged for a miracle. A**

**miracle they wanted, because of Jesus’ reputation, and a miracle they received because of the Grace of their Savior.**

## **II.**

**Now, let’s pause a second and consider what might be the connection between this begging and faith. The fact is that there isn’t any connection. The begging to God can come either from a mind of belief or from a mind of unbelief. Remember when Jesus heals the famous Ten Lepers! Nine take off, never to be seen again. One turns back, upon seeing that he is healed, and worships at the feet of Jesus. Ten begged. One, a Gentile at that, comes to faith. Nine run away from Jesus as fast as they can – not out fear of Him, but just out of the more important things of this life, as unbelievers measure important things.**

**So, there isn’t a necessary connection between begging for miracles and faith. But Jesus knows when He finds faith, and He shows you**

what He knows in the case of this deaf and dumb man. “And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue – showing the one who can’t hear and can’t speak what it is that He, Jesus, is about to do. Then, taking the familiar posture of prayer for that day, “looking up into heaven, He sighed,” and He said to him, ‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’ “Immediately, his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly!”

So, the crowd gets their miracle, but is this miracle wasted on unbelievers? Let’s see: “Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond belief, saying, “He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

So, were these people believers? The truth is, you can’t tell, from what the Scriptural record states. But they certainly spoke the truth, truth whether coming forth out of faith or truth coming just out of amazement. What these Gentile pagan are not doing is rejecting the proclaimed purpose of Christ, as His fellow Hebrews have been doing, miracles and all.

In the end, every miracle is a gift of God, a saving event from the our Lord Jesus Christ. The miracles come, not to impress, but rather to assure your faith that it is rightly grounded in the work and care of Jesus. From this work and care, the faithful do speak forth in faith, the faith that says, “He has done all things well!”