

Jesus Does All Things Well  
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January 20, 2008

Sometimes we...we need to simply state the obvious. We need to just get a grip on the evident, and simply say what is there. We're at that point in our congregational reading of the gospel of Mark. We started last fall, and we will end sometime in the spring as we near summer. We're at a really significant point, and there's going to be a lot of transitions coming in this story as we go forward from here. And this is a great moment in the reading to stop and simply state the obvious; to simply speak of what is there. And we're gonna do that today, because the obvious is so clear. We've been in the gospel of Mark this long—we see it.

Jesus does all things well...astonishingly well...eye-popping, jaw-dropping, head-shaking well. There is in Jesus an unequalled excellence that fills you with wonder and with awe. And we're at that point in the gospel of Mark where we need to say that. We need to state the obvious.

In fact, the text itself will do that. We're gonna be reading through a section beginning at chapter 7, and it starts at verse 31. And we'll read all the way into the eighth chapter today. And as we do that, we're gonna see Jesus again and there's just one main point to make of it, and the text will state it—He does all things well.

When we start the reading, in verse 31, you'll find immediately that there's some geographical notations made. And today I'm gonna put a map up there and try to explain it just a little bit, because there's a flow of what's happening in the book of Mark in chapter 7. It mentions in verse 1 [*Mark 7:31*] of the reading today, it says

*And again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis.*

And you hear those names and you wonder 'What's exactly goin' on?' You need to remember that Jesus spent most of His ministry up north...far north of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a center of things for Palestine and for Israel. And Jesus, however, spent most of His time up in the north, around the Sea of Galilee; more specifically, He spent His time in the region called Galilee just to the west of that lake, or that great sea. And that's where, primarily, for three or four years He spent most His time. Occasionally He would go down to Jerusalem, and then He would go back to that region.

But as chapter 7 unfolds, and we saw it last week, He leaves that area and He goes to another area up by Tyre. And as He does that, He's leaving behind Him a tension-filled area. His ministry had built to the point where crowds were beginning to talk about making Him king, starting a revolution and marching on Jerusalem with Jesus. At the same time, leaders and authorities were sayin', 'We don't trust this guy.' And they were beginning to...there was a rising conflict, an antagonism towards Jesus, and things were getting very tense with the religious authorities. So He had these huge crowds and uprisings building, and He had the authorities starting to say, 'We don't know about this guy.' In fact, they were already starting to talk about maybe putting Him to death. And then the crowds...everywhere He went He couldn't even stop...we're told He couldn't even stop to eat, He and His disciples, because they were just mobbed by people.

So what we have at this point, a very significant staging point for the rest of the book of Mark, and the rest of Christ's ministry—He steps out of that area. He goes where He's not well-known. He goes among the Gentiles. They weren't looking for the Messiah. They weren't planning on the great coming king of Israel. So He went to this area where He thought He could hope to find some quiet alone time with His disciple and prepare for the next stage of His ministry. As we saw last week, it wasn't as quiet as maybe He had wanted. It said that He went and He tried to be in a home and be alone, and still they found Him there. And what we'll find, as we move in this chapter, the opening verse tells us that He moved from Tyre and He went up north a little further to another city called Sidon. And from there, then, He came down through Sidon...He went north to go south, as you'll see...He went through Sidon and came around the Sea of Galilee on the east side, and came down to the region called Decapolis. Literally, that means 'ten cities'. It was an area that had ten prominent cities, and they were all Gentile.

So again, He's out of His home territory, out from among the Jews, and He's out there with the Gentiles who really aren't that concerned about a Jewish Messiah. And He's out there with them. And we're told something happens out there among those ten...in those ten cities out in that region. We're told, as the text moves on...and now we'll start into our reading more closely...it says in verse 32 that

*The brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty...*

And we don't know if it was the disciples who brought him, or just some of the people in that area brought him, and we're not told anything about this man, but we can assume he was a Gentile. And we do know that he was deaf and he spoke with difficulty, and they implored Him, they begged Him, to lay His hand on this man. We're told, instead,

*Jesus took him aside from the crowd by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and then after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva; and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him (the man), "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!" And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began to speak plainly.*

*And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. And they were utterly astonished,*

...we're told, utterly astonished—eye-popping, jaw-dropping, head-shaking astonishment,

*...saying, "He does all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear, and the mute to speak."*

He does all things well.

Surprised that this particular miracle would create such a strong reaction, given some of the others Jesus had done in His home territory. But boy, it connected with these people. And we're told, from the gospel of Matthew, that there was other things that He was doin' at the time. This wasn't the only healing. But it's the one that Mark focuses in on, and it's done so very well. A man who was deaf and can't speak clearly suddenly speaks plainly and can hear everything. And the obvious—Jesus does things well.

And it's not just what He does—it's how He does it. When people look at this particular miracle, and it's very different, it's very distinct from Christ's other miracles, and when you read it you kinda wonder what's goin' on here. It says, first of all, that Jesus took, and they brought this man to Him. And Jesus took him aside from the crowd by himself. He got away from everybody so it was just Him and this man. And then we're told that Jesus put His fingers into his ears. And then the really, really strange one—He spits and He take some of His saliva and He puts it on the man's tongue.

Now I know...you're sittin' there sayin', 'That's weird.' Well you know, in that culture, generally they would have thought it was strange, too. Except for...except for their healers. It wasn't uncommon to have somebody who had the gift of healing to go like this and touch the sore spot. And so it wasn't quite as strange as it hit us, but it's still strange.

And then He looks up to heaven, and then with a deep sigh He says "*Be opened!*" You go through all the gospels, you won't find a miracle like that one. And you say, 'What's goin' on?' It's not hard if you stop and think about it. Do you know what it's like to be deaf in a crowd? You're locked out of what everybody's sayin'. You don't know what's goin' on. You're tryin' to read people's faces. You're tryin' to track their lips. You're tryin' to see where they're goin' to figure out what's happenin'. You see a conversation goin' on between two people; you don't know what's bein' said. You see your friends beggin' this other person to do somethin' but you don't know what they're sayin'; and you're just sittin' there. And you do not have any idea...and the bigger the crowd, the harder it is, the more isolated, the more alone, the more out-of-it you feel. Talk to anybody who has hearing problems and they'll tell you the worst place to be is in a crowd where there's bustle and things goin' on, and there's activity, and you know...you can even feel vibrations, but *you don't know what's happenin'*.

Jesus takes this man alone and just brings it down to Him and this man. And then He touches the man's ears—'*This is what I'm gonna work on. And yeah, I'm gonna heal your tongue.*' And then He looks to heaven, makin' it very clear that He's callin' upon God. And then He says, "*Be opened!*" and the man hears and speaks. A personal touch...a personal touch.

You think, 'Well, why the sigh in the middle of there?' After He does all this, why does he [*makes sighing sound*]? I love that part of it, too. You know, when you're movin' through crowds and you're dealin' with this and you're dealin' with that, and somebody says, 'Hey, pray for this.' And 'Ok, I'll pray. Lord, bless this person.' And then you're doin' this 'Thank You for this food, Lord,' and all this kinda stuff. There is something about Jesus stopping, and before He says anything, before He prays, before He calls upon God, He just goes [*makes sighing sound*]. You know exactly what He's doin'. He's gatherin' His thoughts; He's bringing it into focus. This is not routine. This is not 'Let's just get this job done and we'll move on to the next.' This is engaging God on behalf of another person. And Jesus doesn't do it lightly, routinely, mechanically. Jesus does all things well.

And it becomes more obvious when you go on in this passage and you move into chapter eight. And we're told that in those days, those very same days out there in Decapolis, out there among the Gentiles, out there among the people who didn't know anything about the Messiah, we have Jesus, and it says that a large crowd had gathered around Him. And we'll pick up our reading then. It says that they had nothing to eat. And so Jesus called His disciples and He said to them, in verse 2 of chapter eight, He says

*"I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and they have nothing to eat."*

And it's kind of an interesting picture. They're out in a desolate area, and these people have come out there. And the term 'remained' has the idea they've settled in with Him. They're campin' out with Him. And for three days Jesus has been there with them. And I'm convinced He's tellin' them about the whole messianic thing, and the coming of the kingdom, and all those sorts of things. And He's healing them—we know from the gospel of Matthew they've brought the sick out there and He was healing them. And I also think there was just...you know what, I think in those three days there was times He just hung out with them. And then He realizes, 'You know what? They're out of food.' And He says,

*"If I send them away hungry to their homes,"*

...verse 3,

*"...they will faint on the way; and some of them have come a great distance."*

*And His disciples answered Him; they said, "Where will anyone be able to find bread here enough to, in this desolate place, to satisfy these people?"*

Now, the disciples had been in this kind of situation before, but they weren't sure He'd pull that same miracle out of the hat, and they weren't going to presume upon it. And they just say 'Who's gonna take care of 'em here?' and He says to them, verse 5,

*And He was asking them "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven."*

*And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; and then taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks, He broke them, and He started giving them to His disciples to serve them, the crowd, and they served them to the people.*

They also, we're told, verse 7,

*They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed those, He ordered these to be served as well. And they ate and were satisfied; and then they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. And about four thousand were there; and He sent them away.*

Wow! He does *all* things well! Four thousand people out in the middle of nowhere, and in the four thousand people they have seven loaves of bread and a few small fish—the word there has the idea of a few small sardines. And what does the text say? "*And they ate and were satisfied.*" Seven large baskets full of what was left over eventually was picked up. Picture that! Jesus did that...do I need to state the obvious? He does things really, really well.

And it's not just what he does, again. In this case, I'm intrigued about *why* He does it. This whole miracle, the whole prompt of it, the whole thing that triggered it...verse 2, He says "*I feel compassion for these people.*" He's not sayin' 'Hey, let's stage a really big miracle that'll help people see who I am and get the message out wider.'

He isn't sayin', 'Let's put together a really big even that will rally the crowds around, and we'll build a huge people movement off this event.' He doesn't say that. The only reason He does it is only simply because He looks at these people and He cares about 'em. It isn't about His mission; it isn't about His purpose; it isn't about anything else other than these people need somethin' and He cares about it. I just love it.

Jesus does all things well. Not just what He does, but how He does it, and why. That's the testimony of the past. That's what we've just looked at in Mark's gospel. It's the great promise of the future. We, as Christians, are a people the Bible says who wait for a Savior. We are eagerly awaiting a king. We don't see Him now, and we never have seen Him; but we eagerly anticipate the day when we will see Him. Because when we see Him, we know the One we see will do all things well.

And the promise we have is that One who does all things well is gonna return, and He is gonna set every wrong right. He is gonna return, and He is going to wipe away every single tear and take away every single sorrow. We are told that when He returns He will deal with all disease; He will destroy death—it will be no more. When He returns He will establish a kingdom that will have absolutely no end, a kingdom of righteousness and justice, a kingdom where we will experience the kindness of God day after day after day for all eternity. And it's all built around this person who does all things well.

And there's the reality of His excellence in the presence, in the now, what He's doing right now so very, very well. And I could make a list of things, but I'm only gonna highlight two things that Jesus is doin' right now, today, and He's doin' it so very well.

One is in the heavenly realm. We don't see this, and because we don't see it we seldom think about it. But it's one of the things the scriptures tell us over and over—Jesus is doin' this continually, and it's the most important thing He's doin' for us right now. It's referred to and it's talked about in Romans 8, an interesting chapter that begins on a...on an issue where Christians are struggling with the question of 'What happens when I...I don't wanna do wrong, but I do.' And we struggle with that sense of guilt and condemnation and failure. And chapter 7 of Romans talks about that, and how we who wanna do well find ourselves doing what is wrong. And we struggle with that.

And Romans chapter 8 answers to that. And there's a long portion to it, but the verse I'm gonna highlight is one of my favorites. Verse 34 of chapter 8, Paul says this to these struggling Christians who wonder—'I fail. What does that do for me before God?' And Paul comes back and says 'Who's the one who's gonna condemn you? Ok, you sinned. You did. Now, who is gonna come into God's presence and call down damnation on you? Who? Christ Jesus is He who died and paid for that sin. And yes, rather not only died, but who was raised, who's alive; and not only is alive—who's at the right hand of God right now, even as we speak, and who also intercedes for us. Who is gonna walk into God's presence and call damnation down on you when Jesus is right there taking your side, sin after sin after sin after sin?'

It's out of this verse that Paul goes on to say, 'You know what? There is nothing that can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ.'

Christian, today the love of God is flowing into your life, uninterrupted, unimpeded, and unchanged; and it's because Jesus does all things so very well, no matter how badly you've done 'em.

Take another one on a personal level. This is a really close...one of my favorite verses... Jesus is sayin' good bye to His disciples. He's gonna leave 'em, and they're panicked. They don't wanna see Him go. And they've got nothin' but questions. This is the night before His death, and they have nothin' but questions, and they're struggling with what's gonna happen and everything else. And He makes this statement to 'em. It's a reassuring statement. And it starts in, in John 14:21, and there's some other verses that follow up, but the basic idea is this—'Listen, if you love Me, you'll do what needs to be done. If you love Me, you will keep My words and keep My commands.' That'll happen. You don't have to have a huge list here right now. You don't have to sit here and grit your teeth and say 'I hope I can do it, I hope I can do it, I hope I can do it.' Jesus just simply says, 'Listen—if you love Me, you will.'

And then, as He wraps up that verse, He makes a tremendous statement. He says, '*The Father will love you, and I will love that person who loves Me,*' and then this phrase, '*I'll disclose Myself to him.*'

We've never seen Jesus, as Christians. And we don't see Him now. But His promise is, if we love Him He will make Himself known to us. He will disclose Himself to us. He will make His reality very real to us. And oh, He does this so very well. Over and over and over again, so personal, so private; nobody else would even fully grasp it. Jesus comes into your life and says, 'I'm here.'

Listenin' to my daughter answer some questions in a setting, and there was a series of questions she was answering, and she was kind of giving her life story. And one of the questions was 'When did you know that God was real?' And she was explaining, 'I grew up in a Christian home, I knew that very early.' But she highlighted a moment in her life. She said, "You know, there was one time that really stands out." And she described it again, and as she described it, it brought memories back—almost memories of almost four years ago. And she described a basketball tournament she was in, and how that tournament had played out, and what had happened during that tournament, and the finish of that tournament. And she said, 'You know, it was in that tournament—I knew Jesus was with me. I knew it.' Now, from the outside you wouldn't know it. You'd see a girl having a great tournament, on a team that was having a great tournament, but both the girl and the team fell short. They didn't win the tournament. They didn't get the MVP award. It just looked like a hard-workin' basketball player that had a good tournament. If you knew the story behind it, the little things that I won't even describe to you because it wouldn't even make sense to you—things like a wart that disappeared on a sore foot.

Jesus knew how to make clear to my daughter, at a pivotal point in her life, that He's there. And He does that all the time for us. He does all things well.

I have a book I read once every seven years. That's not intentional. I just figured out that's what I've done; I've read it just about once every seven years. I picked it up in college. It's a book written by a man called Os Guinness, and it's about doubt. And it was one of those things that I clung to during my college years. It discusses Christian doubt and how we process it, and how we deal with it, and those sorts of things. And since then the title of the book has changed, and it's now called "God in the Dark," but it's the same book by the same author, Os Guinness.

And I started rereading it again. And I've read it, like I've said before, but I'm readin' through it, and I hit the end of the first part of the book, and I read this one paragraph, and it just stops me cold. He talks about...you know, our desire to really trust God; and he makes a comment. He raises the question: Do you trust God enough to lean on Him in total dependence? And I could sit there and say 'Yes! I really do. There's nobody else to lean on!'

Then he raises this question: Do you trust Him enough to enjoy Him?

See, we'll trust Him enough to call out in desperation and say, "Jesus, help me!" And then anxiously await and watch, and see if maybe, maybe He can handle this. But we're anxious—"this may be the challenge Jesus can't do. This may be the circumstance He can't handle. I may be the person Jesus just really doesn't care that much about. I may be the person God's too upset with!" And we're anxious and we worry, but we trust—"Ok, I'll call out, I'll look," but we're anxious.

Question is, and it is a huge difference, do you trust Him enough to enjoy Him? When you call out to Him, do you begin to look forward with anticipation, waiting, watching eagerly because you know Jesus is gonna do somethin', and it is gonna be somethin', as you look at it, for you personally, it's gonna be eye-popping, jaw-dropping, head-shaking astonishment. Do you put the anxiety away and move forward with a smile on your face? It's not hard. You don't have to be a profound theologian. You just remember the obvious—Jesus does all things well.

Let's stand.

*Our Father in heaven,*

*As we leave here today, You know all the different things we face. You know the specific trust point each one of us is at in our lives. Father, I pray and I ask that the word we've spent time in today, that we've listened to of Your Son, would be word that sinks into our hearts and to our minds, and gives shape to our response to Him right now.*

*In His wonderful, glorious name we pray, amen.*