Tr. XII(2022)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

*“And [they] were beyond measure astonished. ”* Mk. 7:27

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In our Gospel people pronounced that Jesus, who was born and died for us and for our salvation, that he had done “**all** things well”. This judgment about Jesus made by those in the Decapolis region is similar to the pronouncement God the Father had in Genesis when he reviewed his Creation at each stage: And He saw that is was **GOOD**.

Now the Decapolis region was named for ten ancient cities along the northeastern and eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It then continues south along the river Jordan. Tyre and Sidon were about where present day southern Lebanon is. As he started for Galilee Jesus would have been less than twenty miles as the crow flies from Nazareth.

Scholars have pointed out that for Jesus to go to Galilee from Tyre and Sidon via the Decapolis would be akin to going from Cheyenne to Laramie via Fort Collins. Not the shortest route possible. It is not known whether after this miracle he doubled back along the northern shore into Galilee or whether he continued to walk all around the Sea. This would have been a distance of over 30 miles. Certainly do-able in a very long day, but certainly a hefty hike.

Now why would Jesus not take the short and direct route and possibly a very long route home? In this lull before the storm he might just have been enjoying himself.

Mark's account today of Jesus' healing of the deaf and dumb man in this nearby area at first might sound like “just another miracle”, but it offers much to teach us. It gives an account of Jesus' great compassion. This miracle fits nicely with today's collect which tells us that God is always more ready to **hear** us than we are to pray, and always willing to **give** us more than either we ask or deserve.

Now we heard probably the most famous example of God's compassion and generosity at the beginning of this month in the parable of the prodigal son. We might remember there that the prodigal son was willing to return and just be a hired hand. Instead his father treated him like royalty, to the chagrin of his brother.

So this account gives an example of Jesus' **compassion** not just in his actual curing of the deaf and dumb man, but in the **WAY** that he attended to him. He treated the man as an individual. He gave him time and attention. He took him aside from the crowd all around him.

It is quite likely the man himself was very excited. He was after all the center of attention. Also, one who is deaf often will have speech problems as well since they can not hear the sounds they are making. Such a person might see an excited, agitated crowd, but could not hear what in particular was going on. In his own excitement he may have even more difficulty conversing than usual.

Jesus did not treat the man as simply one of the crowd or as a stage prop. He did more than just lay hands on the man, as the crowd had sought. He spoke; he put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his lips with spittle, a fluid regarded in those days for its curative powers.

Secondly, we also can learn from this miracle a lesson about the difference between *hope* and *trust*. It is obvious that Jesus' reputation as a healer had preceded him. The crowd probably had been drawn by the **hope** that Jesus might cure one of their own. Yet, when they got what they had hoped for and saw that the man was healed, they were “astonished beyond measure”.

Most adults today do not find ourselves “astonished beyond measure” or struck dumb very often, especially by bad news. Almost nothing stuns or shocks us these days from hearing of yet another grisly murder, to tragedies involving children, to immoral behavior in the White House. Almost nothing anyway. Fourteen years ago though we all were "astonished beyond measure" as our nation was attacked with thousands of innocent people being killed even leaping to their deaths.

Yet, how many of us are astonished beyond measure and joyful at the resiliency this nation has displayed time and time again? Probably not many. This reflects the **trust** that over generations has grown within the heart of our nation. We know who we are and what sort of people we are.

While America has changed in many ways, with earthshaking recent ones still fresh in our memory, we all know that our national spirit continues to pursue human freedom and accomplish great charitable works such as bringing food, freedom or medical care to others in need. This resiliency is the result, the **fruit**, of the Spirit of Christ operating through the people of this land, and it plays out every day. It is the spirit of him who conquered mere mortal death.

Now we all still get amazed at times, and not just by tragedies such as 9-11. Most likely we get amazed by people we meet. We may meet someone who has given up marriage to serve the Lord--monastics or Catholic priests-- or someone who is very brave and selfless (Doctors without Borders) and we get amazed. We may at last meet someone of whom we've seen or heard much, maybe a politician, and be amazed at how normal or kind the person is "in the flesh".

For most of us though, perhaps the best area for adults to recall being amazed as an adult is in the area of courtship. We may have experienced setbacks and heartbreaks in prior romances and just assumed that the next person we meet will lead to more of the same. We of course hope otherwise, but have not grown ready or able to trust.

As our hopes in our new romance are not disappointed, but rather rewarded and reinforced, we allow trust to grow. This happens in newlyweds all the time. Over time any married couple ceases to be amazed that his or her spouse actually is where he or she promised to be at the appointed time. One only becomes amazed, and concerned, when he is **not**.

Trust in God does not come easily either. Our world reinforces that "seeing is believing" and that to believe in something which we can not discern with our senses is, well, superstition and the province of the simple minded.

So we want to take slow small steps in trusting God. Maybe we can start by asking Jesus to help us find our lost keys, a fairly common problem in our home. More than one lost item around our own house has been found shortly after simply asking Jesus (or often St. Anthony) to help. This builds trust.

On a bigger level we may be confronting a calamity in our life, such as a sudden injury, disease or an addiction in the family. At such point hope and trust in the Lord for his aid may be all that we have to fall back upon. At such times our faith and trust will grow exponentially faster.

But whether we grow slowly or quickly in trusting in the Lord we will know that our faith has matured when we reach a certain point. And that point is where we no longer are “astonished beyond measure” whenever the Lord, who has done all things well, actually does help us.

At such times we need be thankful to Him not only for his aid, but also for the fact, as our Epistle points out, that we now live in "a changed world", a world where we have become children of the Creator of the Universe. Amen. +