

Pentecost 16; Mark 7:31-37

September 12, 2021

September 11, 2001. 20 years ago on that day, America was under attack. On that day, nearly 3,000 people lost their lives in New York, Washington D.C. and Pennsylvania. For many of us, we remember that day. We remember where we were when the news began to break. We remember many of the details of that day. As the day progressed, we slowly began to realize the tragedy that had happened that morning. It was on that day that we experienced the worst tragedy that our nation has ever faced. It was a dark day to be sure.

Yet, it was a day that brought a profound sense of compassion to our country as well. People were brought together to help in whatever way they could. If you have ever gone through the 9/11 Museum in New York City, you can't help but be moved to tears as you look at the artifacts and pictures.

Perhaps, that is how God felt about this world after he had created it. As God had finished the work of creating this world, Moses records these words: **"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."** (Genesis 1:31) His creation was perfect, but it wouldn't last long. Sin soon entered the world and ruined that perfect creation. Yet, what does God do? He has compassion on this world. Instead of destroying the world, he promises to save it. **"For the son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."** (Luke 19:10). Throughout the pages of the Bible, we see God having compassion on mankind again and again and again.

In our text this morning, we see one of those examples. Jesus demonstrates his love and compassion on the man in our text this morning. **"Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man."** This man is undeniably helpless. He has two strikes against him in that day – he was deaf and he could hardly talk. This man wasn't living in our age of communication and technology. He didn't have the tools that we would have today. We can only assume that there were those who looked down on this man. Can you imagine the difficulties that he might have had in life?

In the verses following our text, Jesus says: **"I have compassion for these people"** (Mark 8:2) Compassion – a Greek word that originally would be translated as the "inner parts." It would come to mean compassion, because the emotion of compassion is something that would flow out of the inner parts of someone. The Samaritan man felt so sorry for the man who had been attacked by robbers that he had compassion on him. Jesus had compassion on this deaf and mute man, a *"nobody"* in the eyes of the world. He puts his arm around him, and after he takes him aside and **"Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!")"** He has compassion on him.

There are a lot of hurting people in our world today. Worldwide. Nationwide. Here in Franklin. And right here in this room. There are people here, I would guess, who are still sad because of the loss of a loved one. There are people who are struggling from the pain of divorce. There may be some who are struggling with depression or are trying to pick up the pieces in a broken life. Some may be out of work. Others might have received bad news from the doctor. And even if there is- no one here going through those things, we all know people who are. We need someone who can put their fingers on us and say **"Be Opened."** I don't mean that he might take away all our pain or struggles, because he may choose not to. But he does promise to have compassion on us.

On that day, Jesus did far more than heal that deaf man who could hardly speak. He came to fulfill the prophecy which would deal with all such troubles forever! We read earlier of the prophecy from Isaiah 35, **"Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy."** Our God came to save us. He came in human flesh and he touched the deaf man's ears with his own hands. As fully human he spat, sighed, and looked up to the heavens. Jesus, the Son of God came to meet us at our own level in love. He has spoken to us in a way that we can clearly understand, *"I care about you."*

With a single word he healed that deaf man. With another single word he spoke in the flesh, **“it is finished,”** he heals our souls. By that word he proclaimed on the cross, he declared the payment for every sin. We too can say the same thing that those who saw Jesus show compassion on this man: **“He has done everything well.”** God’s rescue plan was not a plan that was half done or not fully completed. It is done completely and perfect. Our sins are forgiven. We are restored. **“He has done everything well.”**

Every time that we have a baptism, we are reminded so much of that. As that water is applied in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, a person’s sins are washed away. We once again see that in the second service this morning as a little child is brought to the baptismal font. We were reminded of that this past Friday at the funeral of Betty Patin as she had been baptized 90 years ago. That baptism was so important to her that she had her baptism certificate hanging on the wall of her home. Then after the funeral we saw God once again work through the power of his word and water. About four years ago, I had married a grandniece of Betty’s. She approached me and asked if I would baptize their daughter now. Of course, I would. So, a group of us walked from the hallway of the school and back into church, and we had a baptism here as well. It was really awesome.

God has compassion for His broken world and reaches out through us to touch and to restore. Just as Jesus has compassion on us, so may we have compassion on others. We get to be God’s hands to show compassion on others. That can be a teacher in a classroom. That can be the loving hands of a parent with their child. That can be with those who we work with. That can be with all who are here today and who are watching this online. May God help all of us to do that in Christ. Amen.