

Homily 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (9.9.18)

**'He has done all things well.'**  
**The miracles of Jesus encourage us to reflect**  
**the compassion & the love of God**

I think it's very hard to enter the scene of the miracles that Jesus performed, because we have no idea of the absolute illness and sicknesses that must have existed in his day. The nearest we could get to it is, I suppose, a really impoverished country of today, where there's lack of medical facilities or drugs or treatment, and in some countries, disease is rife from all sorts of things. And that would have been the world that Jesus inhabited because of the poverty and the oppression. And there's been a lot written about it, about how many of the maladies that we would have described as mental illness did exist, but they saw it as demon possession. And you can see in some of the miracles that Jesus performed it said he cast out devils, you can see the signs there of all sorts of mental illness.

One of the things that is impressive is that Jesus had this tremendous ability to cure. Josephus the historian records that Jesus appeared and time past and was an incredible miracle worker. And we know from other documents, especially some of the Greek mystery cults, that they used his name as an incantation. So obviously his reputation went long after him for his ability to cure. But Jesus himself, it's very interesting, even though he did gestures like this, putting his fingers in the ear and using spittle, certainly didn't use any magical rites or incantations. He didn't associate himself with any cults that were doing that sort of thing.

But what we do get through the eyes of the Gospel, if you look carefully, is that he never... Well, first of all, you obviously get his incredible compassion for people. But one of the countercultural things of his day was of course he looked upon the sick often as close to God. He counteracted the popular opinion that to be ill or seriously sick, you must have committed some terrible sin or that you were cursed for something your ancestors had done. Jesus

wipes all that away in his teaching. So that's radical, that no blame to be attached to the illness an individual had. That's quite a strong anti-cultural or countercultural action. It reminds us to look at our own culture and see where these prejudices in our own culture exist, different prejudices for our generation may be. And for us, where do we need to be countercultural?

And then the other thing about Jesus is that he seems to, most times, make a commentary or talk about the invasion of the Kingdom of God. That his miracles are not just done... He's not a wonder worker, they're done to show something greater, the bigger healing that's needed for all of us. So when they lowered the paralytic through the roof and he said,

"Your sins are forgiven,"

and they all started mumbling and grumbling, He said,

"Well, which is easy to do? To say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Get up and walk?'" But to prove to you the Son of Man has this power, I say,

"Get up and walk." But Jesus was actually teaching that the greater miracle, the greater miracle was what you couldn't see, the forgiveness of sins.

And we see a lovely touch in our miracle today. Because it's really, again, reminds us of our own dealings with other people. They brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech and they asked him to lay his hands on him. He took him aside in private, just a lovely little detail, isn't it? It's a beautiful little detail preserved in the Gospel. Jesus had a great sense of restoring people's dignity. So he took him aside in private so he wouldn't be embarrassed with all this crowd around. And that's a good reminder to us. When we're dealing with others, do we deal with them when it's necessary in private to give them their dignity, especially if it's something we've got that we need to have out with them or a problem, that we respect their space and their ability to walk away holding their heads high? And even when we're doing good, that's the important thing. Jesus himself said that, didn't he? He said,

"Don't let your right hand know what your left and is doing."

So that when we help someone or somebody especially who is maybe financially in trouble, to do it in private, to give them their dignity so that they don't feel they're being made a cause or looked at in a lower way.

And then, a lovely touch is in this Gospel. We know from this Gospel of course, that implied in it, and I bet Jesus knew that text of Isaiah. He would have known Isaiah's prophecy that when God brings His liberation, the deaf will hear and the dumb will speak. He would have known His Isaiah backwards. And this miracle I think is Jesus saying,

"The prophecy of Isaiah is now being fulfilled."

But the last thing I spotted which I think is wonderful, the crowd said not only,

"Has done all things well," but they say... "Making the deaf hear and the dumb speak," it's the phrase,

"He has done all things well."

Because it's resonant of the Book of Genesis, when God had finished His creation and said He did all, all was good, all that God did was well at the end of creation. So there's an implication there in the text that Jesus is actually making a new creation through the grace of God.