



JESUS REALLY HAS THE MIDAS TOUCH!

Grace/Caminando con Jesús Lutheran Church

Pentecost 16 (B)

September 13, 2015

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SERMON TEXT

Mark 7:31-37

✝ IN NOMINE JESU ✝

Amen! You all sang the truth—What God ordains *is always* good. He couldn't give you a bad gift if he tried. He wouldn't know where to start to give you anything but what he is—good and perfect!

I tell you this: much of remaining Christians our whole lives through hinges on holding on to that truth. It's what enables us to shout defiantly at Satan and our doubting hearts on the day of trouble, "Away from me, Satan! God gives me days of gladness and I will trust him still when he sends me sadness." And yet, I don't have to tell you that holding on to the truth that what God ordains is always good is—throughout the course of a lifetime—one of the most challenging of all Biblical truths to hold onto. As you well know, there is a rub between the truth that God only gives good and perfect gifts and the painful and troubling things and circumstances in life that seem anything but good and perfect. And, sometimes, the friction between what God says in his word and the pain in life we feel can rub our believing hearts raw, and like a warm, moist place to a fungus, the raw flesh of our hurting hearts becomes the perfect environment for infectious doubts to form and spread to the point of killing our faith in Jesus.

Since, so much is at stake with our topic today—nothing less than our spiritual and eternal lives—and since the hurts, troubles, and those painful, pointy thorns in our flesh can, in fact, be the source of our undoing, today I want us all to grow stronger together in the conviction of what we sang that we may never fall

away but stand firm in Christ and remain faithful to him to the end. To this end I invite you to join me not in the “Tri-Cities” but the “Ten-Cities,” the Decapolis in Greek, and there see definitively and once and for all this blessed truth: **Jesus Really Has the Midas Touch!**

Oh, Really?

It’s amazing how Jesus leads us to a stronger conviction of that truth. He leads us there through the very difficulties and pains in life that make us wonder about that. In Psalm 13, for instance, the Psalmist confidently cries out, “I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.” But he is led there through his woes that led him to first cry out in pain, “How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?” So, as we journey with Jesus to the “Ten-Cities,” let’s ask the question that might well be on the mind of a believer on the day of trouble at hearing that Jesus has the Midas touch and everything will work out well—*Oh, really?*

We can’t say for sure, because our text doesn’t expressly tell us here but it’s not hard to imagine that perhaps the deaf, mute man we meet here wondered about God’s goodness in his life. This man may have been born physically deaf, but he was surely born spiritually blind to the truth that God was only doing what was absolutely good for him and wasn’t punishing him for a specific sin. And so, the only thoughts the wheels of his fallen reason could churn out were thoughts like this: If God does all things well and is the source of all good because he is good, then why did he make me deaf? What did I do to deserve this? What did my parents do to earn themselves a deaf, mute child? Yes, I’ve learned to get by, but doesn’t he know how badly I want to hear my mother’s voice and the sound of my nieces and nephews laughing? Can’t he see how frustrating it is for me to try to communicate with others? Can’t he see how much it hurts

me to be shunned and how worthless it makes me feel to be a pity case? Sometimes, I feel like it would be better had I never been born. Then, at least, I wouldn't be a burden to anyone." We don't have to know anything specific about this man's character or frame of mind to imagine this. Just knowing he was "**deaf and could hardly talk,**" is enough to imagine him wanting to scream at the person who told him, "God has a good plan for you"—"*Oh, really? You think so? Let's trade places, and see how confident you feel about that.*"

What God ordains is *always* good! *Oh, really?* I, of course, can't read your minds but I know mine, and I know what I've felt, what I've thought, what I've prayed with tears in the late night hours all alone in the midst of my own trials of faith—Lord, can't you see this is killing me! This is too much! Too much. I'm so tired. I already have too much on my plate. I can't handle anymore." I've felt trapped, stuck in what all I can see is a bad situation—"I can't it take anymore. I want out! I'm sick and tired of always trying to be good, always trying to do what's right, always trying to keep it together." In my pains and frustrations I've wondered just what the good, what the lesson is that I'm supposed to learn; I've wondered if this or that woe was simply a consequence of some past misdeed and which one, my own or another's. I've looked at outcomes in life, how things have turned out for people I care about, and I've wondered, "What *good* can possibly come of this?" I know that in some, way, shape or form you've all been there, or you all will be. And because trouble often shows up at our doorstep unexpectedly, it doesn't seem like a well-thought out, well-planned good, but like just bad luck with no rhyme or reason, no good purpose. We wouldn't be what the weak, sinful human people the Bible says we are if at some point in the face of hardship, loss, or some unfortunate turn of events we didn't feel that way and fall to the temptation

to doubt God's faithfulness to his promise to work *all* things for the good of those who love him, and then live nervously waiting for the other shoe to drop, for the next bad thing to happen. In short, we wouldn't be weak, helpless, easily straying sheep in need of our Good Shepherd, Jesus, if at some point in our trials and troubles we didn't respond to the blessed truth of our text—**Jesus Has the Midas Touch!**—with a skeptical "*Oh, really?*"

Yes, Really!

But, I told you that the journey to a stronger conviction of the truth that Jesus has the Midas touch in our lives goes through the forrest of hurts and troubles that lead us to wonder about that very truth. And I meant it. At the end of this forrest that makes us cry "*Oh, really?*" we come out of the tree line and arrive at the life-giving waters and soul-renewing pastures that strengthen and grow our conviction in the truth that Jesus always has the Midas touch in our lives—the very word that shamelessly proclaims that Jesus does all things well for us, even in, *yes, especially in* our need and suffering! Just throw yourself on and fall into this word before us, and watch how it leads us to conclude what the people of the Decapolis concluded at the end of the lesson —"**He has done everything well.**"

Consider first the wonderful blessing of the man's pain and sorrow, his deafness and muteness, in the Lord's plan for this man's salvation. We imagined the questions that might have crept into this man's mind because of his deafness and muteness. Now imagine what it would have been like had he enjoyed the gift of normal hearing and speaking. Do you think his countrymen would have rushed him to meet his Savior? What for? Do you think he would have rushed on his own to see Jesus? Maybe, but not likely. You know how it is when people are doing really well for themselves: they forget about Jesus, or

at least, they feel that except for Christmas and Easter there's really no pressing need. Had this man been able to hear and talk normally, he may well have been at his job when Jesus came by and missed him altogether. And if he had a lucrative and successful career, well he'd have even less incentive for him to take time out of his busy day to go hear some traveling preacher. Time is money, you know! So, the best thing Jesus ever did for this man before he met him was rule over all things to ensure that something in his life was badly broken and made him sad and needy. This is how the man came to meet his Deliverer from sin and everything sin broke, including his ears and tongue. When you think that this man is possibly in heaven today in part because of his deafness and muteness, just how precious were those gifts?

Then notice carefully how perfectly Jesus deals with the needs and suffering he sends or allows, and delivers his people from them in just the right way and at just the right time. Consider: Jesus healed countless others before this man, but look. There is nothing cookie-cutter in Jesus' manner or method of dealing with him. He takes into account this man's individual needs. The poor man is frightened as the crowd grabs him and leads him to Jesus. He understands little, if anything, of what the crowd is doing. But Jesus understands. So he addressed the man's momentary fear gently. Jesus **"he took him aside, away from the crowd,"** so that it was just him and the man. Knowing that the man couldn't hear, Jesus used the man's senses of sight and touch to show him what he was going to do for him, like a good doctor might do for a frightened child. "Here's what I'm going to do. No need to be afraid. Jesus **"put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue,"** as if to say I know your problem. I'm here to fix it. And then as if to say "I'm the Counsel representing you before God. I know how hard

it's been for you. My will is to let you hear your mother's voice and the children's laughter," Jesus **"looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!")"**

See? **Jesus really has the Midas touch!** Is not your heart singing loudly, *Amen! Yes, really!* Really he does! Of course it is! In the light of this word you can look back here and now at previous trials and hurts in your life and see that it was precisely those troubles that helped shove us to Jesus if only to yell at him, "Why?" or cry "Help! Can't you see this is killing me," or yelp in our pain, "Lord, have mercy! I have nowhere else to turn!" And so, on the basis of this word you know again that we all sit here citizens of paradise safely nestled under our Savior's pierced hands, right next to his pierced side, *because of*, not in spite of, our woes! You know again that Jesus has given us just the right needs and pain—no more, no less—to land us in his arms. Based on this word you know better than ever how Jesus has handled you with perfect understanding of our hurt and compassion for it. You can see how he has dealt with us patiently and forgiven us completely of all our doubts, and has come to our aid and given us strength and help and deliverance, just when we needed, just when we felt, That's it! I'm done. I can't do this anymore. Maybe it was a phone call, a card, a visit, a sermon that made you say, "Does Pastor have my phone wiretapped? How did he know that's what I needed to hear?" You know again, that's Jesus, the Destroyer of sin which causes all my woes with his Midas touch, loving me perfectly. *Perfectly!*

Jesus really has the Midas touch! Don't ever doubt it. From this moment forward live in the confidence of that truth. When trouble comes, don't panic. Stay calm. As the Psalmist and the hymn-writer sing, "Be still. God is with you because he is for you." Hold on. Hold on. Do the beautifully insane thing that Paul and

James call us to do in and with our sufferings—*rejoice in and thank the Lord for them*, because we know that just as he brought about the ultimate good for us through his pain and suffering on Calvary, he is doing something really good for us through ours, not letting even one pain go to waste! At all times and in every circumstance, keep using the able tongues he has given you, even as he gave the deaf man, to proclaim the very good things Jesus has done, until we walk those heavenly streets paved with gold and realize fully how Jesus turned every bad and painful thing in our lives golden. Amen.

SOLI DEO GLORIA