

Trinity XII

2 Corinthians 3: 4-9 & Mark 7: 31-37

August 18, 2024

Recently, I was at the bedside of a man that I ministered to. Before he passed away, he said, “today is history”. Meditating on this remark, I realized that we often think of “history” as a record of things only done by great people – accomplishments that change the course of the world. It is true, we “study” history by reading books and accounts of extraordinary events. However, we forget that they were simply ordinary people who happened to make some intentional choices that had long-term and wide-reaching consequences.

We now live in a time when there is a lot of talk about making history. We just accomplish this and that and we will make history. Or we will make history electing this person to office.

That’s only one way to view history, but perhaps we should remind ourselves that we all make history every day!

The question we need to ask ourselves should be: what kind of history are we making? For what purpose?

In today's gospel, Jesus answers this important question. St Mark, the gospel writer, shows us Jesus on the move. His description of the itinerary is frankly surprising to modern bible students like us because we read that Jesus left Tyre, went north to Sidon, made His way east, came back south, then back up to the Sea of Galilee. It would be like somebody from Baltimore wanting to go to Richmond and going by way of New York. The question is, Why in the world did He take the trip in this manner? The answer to the question is that Jesus is making history.

We know that there was a cultural and religious divide between Jews and the inhabitants of Decapolis. In Jesus’ time, Decapolis was a region of ten cities. The people living there were Greek and were satisfied with their freedom under Roman authority. They enjoyed their Greek practices, from sacrificing in their temples to eating pork. Rome provided support for their practices and helped them resist the worldview of the Jews. A reading of ancient records helps us understand that the religious Jews of Jesus’ day naturally opposed the values and practices of the Greeks. For example, the presence of pigs in Decapolis (Mark 5: 11) have made the entire region offensive and off-limits to the Jews.

So, by going to this area, Jesus made history: (1) He broke the walls between Jews and non-Jews and opened the Kingdom of God to the citizens of the region of Decapolis. If we’re willing to be the Christian kind of people who build friendships across cultural boundaries, we’re going to see God do some wonders through us. We’ll see our faith get stretched as we must lean more on God. We’ll gain a wider perspective by learning to see the world through other cultures’ eyes.

(2) We can also say that Jesus went to that region just for the deaf man. I say that because we don't see him doing anything else in that region. Jesus went out just for that man.

The Greek word describing this man's speech impediment, mogilalos, is a rare one. It occurs only here in the New Testament and only in Isaiah 35: 5-6 in the Old Testament. Its presence here is significant because there Isaiah predicted that Messiah would come and loose tongues of the dumb. So, Jesus fulfilled this prophecy in the region of Decapolis by healing the deaf man who also had an impediment in his speech, because defective speech usually results from defective hearing, both physically and spiritually.

This man's inability to hear or communicate had put him in danger, because he is unable to hear, therefore unable to avoid harm. Spiritual deafness is no different. When we cannot hear God, we inevitably lose our direction and fall into a dangerous path away from God's will for us. We must spiritually heal so that we can understand God's Word in our lives. Finally, Jesus healed this man so that he can do what he was created to do which is to praise and worship God.

As we continue our walk through this great season of Trinity, we must keep in mind that Jesus did not avoid the people living in darkness (Matt. 4:16). He made history by going to them and by piercing the darkness of their sinful lifestyle with the light of God's message of salvation and love.

Jesus wants us to follow his example in confronting the darkness in our own world, in our country, and what we see in our cities these days. That's how we can make history.

May the Lord help us understand that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but that our sufficiency is of him.

Prayer

O GOD, merciful and compassionate, who art ever ready to hear the prayers of those who put their trust in thee; Graciously hearken to us who call upon thee, and grant us thy help in this our need; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.