

In the name of ✝ Jesus.

When we confess Jesus, we confess who He is and what He has done. These two foci support one another. Indeed, today we see Jesus for who He is by what He did. Today Jesus shows Himself to be the God we confess.

So, what did Jesus do? In two separate incidents Jesus enacted the prophetic word spoken of Him. In the first incident, Jesus encountered a woman whose daughter was afflicted with an unclean spirit.

Jesus had just had a rather unpleasant experience with the Pharisees and scribes and so He wanted to be by Himself. He went off to Gentile territory — the region of Tyre and Sidon — and entered into a house there secretly. But it wasn't to be. He was found out, and this Syrophenician woman came to Jesus with her plea for mercy; "please, *'cast [this] demon out of [my] daughter,'*" she begged Him.

Now Jesus didn't answer her prayer immediately; in fact, He tested the woman; "*it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.*" He was testing her faith.

And Jesus was pleased by what He heard. She was not deterred; the woman believed, at the very least, that Jesus was able to do what she asked. But also, she believed that, even though she was not a Jew by birth, Jesus would heal her daughter. "*Yes, Lord,*" she said, "*yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.*" Even the crumbs that fell from the children's table would be sufficient. And she was right. "*For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter,*" Jesus replied. When she arrived home, she found her daughter in bed but no longer afflicted.

Who could do such wonderful things? Jesus had already demonstrated this power in His ministry, and the people marveled at it. Then the unclean spirit himself bore witness: "*I know who you are—the Holy One of God*" (Mark 1:24). More important, though, is the fulfillment of the prophetic word: "*I [the Lord] will ... do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder*" (Is. 29:14). Jesus' deeds bore witness to who He is: the Lord, the Holy One of God.

Jesus went from that Gentile country to another, the region of the Decapolis, as he made His way to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. There in that region, you might recall, Jesus had encountered a man possessed with a Legion of unclean spirits. Jesus cast them into pigs that all rushed off a cliff into the sea. The man, cleansed of these demons, went about proclaiming what Jesus had done.

No wonder, then, that some men in that region brought a deaf and mute man to Jesus to be healed. Unable to ask for himself, these men *“begged [Jesus] to lay his hand on [the man]”* and heal Him. Again, Jesus answered their prayers. With a bit of theater — fingers in the ears and spittle on the tongue, thus identifying to the man what He was about to do — Jesus looked to heaven with a sigh and spoke: *“‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’”* And the man’s ears were opened, and his tongue loosed; and the man began to speak plainly!

Imagine that — never having heard anyone speak, never having used his tongue to speak himself, and now he is able to speak plainly. Another wonder! Another enactment of the prophetic word, this one from our Old Testament lesson: *“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.”* About whom was this prophecy spoken? Of God. Yes, these deeds of Jesus bear witness to who He is. He, who made all things and saw that it was good, was at work here doing *“all things well.”* Again in the words of the demons called Legion: *“Jesus, [is the] Son of the Most High God”* (Mark 5:7).

All this is marvelous, and it reminds us that we Gentiles, like the woman for her daughter and like the men for their deaf and mute friend, can come to Jesus in our time of need and for the needs of others. We can come in faith to Him, knowing how He answers prayers. We can remember the wonderful promises attached to our faithful cries for mercy: that we can call upon Him *“In the day of [our] trouble ... for [He] answer[s] [us]”* (Ps. 86:7); that *“whatever [we] ask of the Father in [Jesus’] name, he will give it to [us]. ... Ask, and [we] will receive, that [our] joy may be full”* (John 16:23-24); that *“[Asking] ... it will be given to [us],”* for *“If [we] ... know how to give good gifts to [our] children, how much more will [our] Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him”* (Matt. 7:7, 11).

The Lord, our Rock, is not deaf to His people, but does hear us when we call to Him, and He helps us as we pray in faith according to His will. Thus, we prayed today according to these promises that the Lord’s *“merciful ears [would] be open to [our] prayers,”* and that we might always *“ask ... in accord with [His] gracious will”* (Collect for Proper 18B).

But more than for things temporal, as is often our wont, let us keep in mind the things eternal and let our requests be made known to the Lord in that realm also, for knowing who Jesus is as true God, we also know first and foremost why He came, as the prophet told us: *“Behold, [Jesus, our] God [came] with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He [came to] save [us].”*

According to God's righteous plan, Jesus came to mete out vengeance upon our enemies. He came to defeat them utterly — the devil and his demons that assail us, the world with all of its corruptions, and our own defiling sinful nature. Jesus came and, as the Scriptures say, partook of our "*flesh and blood ... that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery*" (Heb. 2:14-15). Jesus came Himself as "*the recompense of God,*" placing the sins of the world on His righteous flesh, enduring God's righteous wrath for them, shedding His blood as our redemption, rising from the dead as the receipt of our debt paid.

Jesus came enacting the prophetic word, showing us who He is, demonstrating His power over a world corrupted by sin. He did it that we might believe in Him and make our salvation sure, that with our bodies washed, our ears opened, and our tongues loosed, we may sing His praises, tell of Him who "*has done all things well,*" and pray without ceasing to Him who hears our prayers and answers our cries for mercy.

Therefore, we pray, O Lord, feed us now and strengthen our faith that we may show forth our faith also by what we do, not only for the rich, but also for the poor, all those who are in need of Christ's Good News. And grant that as recipients of our good works, they may praise not us but You, O Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit.