

Faith in Jesus

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Mark 7

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This morning we have decided to focus our attention on the events in Mark chapter 7 and its companion chapter Matthew 15. So let's set the scene by recapping recent events, and then moving through our chapter, drawing out some encouraging lessons for us.

A Rejected Jesus

First the Pharisees had said he was possessed by Beelzebub. And that his miracles were not of God. Then while he was speaking to the crowds his mother and brothers came and stood outside asking to speak to him... From the Old Testament types we understand that it was likely his jealous brothers, that wanted him to stop. To make their lives easier. While his loving protective mother came along too to make sure nothing got out of hand. So he had no family support. Then after speaking many parables, he was rejected at Nazareth. His home town. Where did you get such wisdom? You're just a nobody. (Ever try denying evolution, it doesn't matter what you say, how logical, how scientific, it doesn't matter - who are *you*?) And they were offended. It means they couldn't get past their pride. And Jesus didn't do many miracles. Jesus, while having the Spirit of God without measure, a heart of pure compassion and love, was unable to find many people with enough faith to justify helping them. He was ignored, despised and rejected, dismissed out of hand. How many times have you brothers and sisters, been drawn into an argument with those of your own family, those you love, who for a variety of reasons, accept all kinds of beliefs, but won't even look at the truth of God. Everything you say is dismissed and deflected out of hand. Who are you?

A Lonely Jesus

I'm not sure about you, but speaking for myself, I am at my best when I have the backing of those I care about, when I feel accepted, encouraged, and respected. Finally, as sad as all this already is, Herod had imprisoned Christ's childhood friend John the Baptist, and then murdered him in cold blood, to save face in front of his courtiers. How much pressure can a man be expected to take? Hounded and resisted by the scribes, the pharisees, the experts and teachers of the law. Herod Antipas no doubt wanting him dead as well. His family

and those he knew from childhood not interested. His followers only after the food and not interested in the message, had abandoned him in droves. And yet now... when you would expect a person to be at breaking point, we read about the curious episode where Jesus comes to his disciples walking on the water. That is, he goes alone to pray while sending them off in a boat and then when a storm brews and threatens their lives, they see Jesus walking calmly over the waves towards them, it's so unbelievable that they *don't* believe it. And instead of taking heart, they take fright. Could the message be any clearer? Even in the fellowship you will experience trials so threatening to your spiritual health, that you fear for your spiritual life, in that little boat so easily thrown around in the towering waves. That salty taste, that burning sensation on your forehead, you attempt to stay afloat. And who is it that comes to your rescue. A supremely serene Jesus, effortlessly negotiating the waves, as they collide and interact, he walks on a smooth flat path directly towards those who need his help. Instead of being at his lowest ebb, he is full of spiritual strength, faith and love. The fellowship is secure, your calm comes from the presence of Christ. And if there's any doubt, Peter underlines the point, with a *rush* of faith, he does what no one else in the fellowship thinks is possible, he joins Jesus in this miracle, flying flatly against everything fishermen knew, he too walks on the water. But it isn't quite enough, he falters, and Jesus is immediately there, out stretched hand. Jesus is all you need. Mark adds:

“Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.”

And I want to humbly suggest that in those words we have an insight into ourselves, 2000 years later. We should be cautious before thinking we are the pinnacle of spirituality. Not to think our spiritual eyes are like hawks, and our spiritual hearts are as soft as grease, and that we are the possessors of all wisdom. We hear his voice, we understand his message, but I am quite certain when he returns there will be a lot of surprises. Let's minimise the bad ones eh? :)

A Resilient Jesus

So *this* is the Jesus we meet in Mark 7.1: A man brimming with faith, a resilient, focused man. Absolutely on-point. To say he was tough would be to paint him with the colours of a word that is usually reserved for those that don't mind treading on others to achieve their goals. Jesus though has an astounding ability to rise above it all, to remain buoyant. As Jesus is healing right left and centre, those persistent Pharisees, that had come all the way from Jerusalem, to search him out (by now Jesus was right up on the North West tip of the Sea of Galilee some 50 miles away from Jerusalem) now gathered around him (verse 1), and all they could come up with was that they saw some of his disciples eating without having first washed their hands. It said more about them than it did about the disciples. The pharisees valued those things, and they looked down on anyone that didn't behave the same way, and isn't that always the way. I heard this week from a sister who has left the fellowship and all she said to me was that in central she felt welcome in the clothes she felt comfortable in, namely trousers. I thought, good, but it's always the way isn't it. In our search for purity it's easier to exclude those that outwardly don't do it the way we do. You

can see a pair of trousers, while it's harder to see the heart.

A Critical Jesus

Well Jesus wastes zero time in replying to them doesn't he. It's as if he's got a list of their own practices which he's noticed, but he hasn't had an opportunity for a while, so now he just *goes for it*

“Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites. You honour me with your lips but not your hearts, and you obey human rules not my rules.”

These days we would call this virtue signalling, and political-correctness. It's easy to identify faults in others, and in the act of identifying them, we pretend that we're not like them. It's always the others isn't it? By talking about other's faults, we signal our own flawless virtue, publishing the fact that 'we would never do such a thing' and obeying human rules, is good when it's about politeness, but it so often goes further and descends into political-correctness, not offending someone, not being out of place, fitting in. Jesus doesn't stop there. (verse 9)

“You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!”

It has always been done that way! Well tradition makes a harsh teacher. Like the proverbial frog in the cooking pot that's gradually warmed up, tradition has the effect of making one very very comfortable and very very sleepy, until. Jesus tips the pot upside down.

This is classic Jesus:

“Moses says honour your father and your mother, but you say, they can get out of doing that if they give money to the temple instead, so your tradition nullifies God's word. And you do many things like that.”

Jesus has no time whatever for that type of politeness that obscures the plain truth. He is always thinking of the onlookers, those that need to be set free from the burdens laid at their feet by their ancestors. Where there is a man made argument that causes someone else suffering, he resolutely opposes it. Jesus' strength and stature and poise is again in evidence, he calls the crowd closer, and encourages them to listen and understand that nothing going into a person can defile them, only the things which come out of them. And to his disciples he gives a full explanation, teaching that all foods are clean, and listing all that is in the human heart, verse 19:

“‘For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.’ (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)...

He went on:

‘What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come – sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.’”

The reason for me listing these evils, is that, would you believe, I was having a discussion during the week, with an agnostic, where they maintained that if you look at human history, they believed it showed that humans have evolved, that the notion of *human nature* being a fixed thing, wasn't borne out. After all, we've ended slavery, serious crime rates are down, and our society is stable - surely this shows that the Bible is wrong when it tries to say that the human race needs redemption, when rather, all it needs is the passage of time, to gradually improve itself. But hang on... The anti-slavery movement was led by Wilberforce in England (because of his Christianity) and abolitionists in America were dominated by Christians. These believers reasoned that since we are all created equal in the eyes of God, no one has the right to rule another without consent. This is the moral basis not only of anti-slavery but also of democracy. And it's democracy that leads in turn to our stable societies, with their smooth transfer of power across time, and our structures that can give rise to the conditions necessary for lower crime rates. Christians believe that it is possible for us to be created in the image of God, while simultaneously accepting that we are essentially corrupt and selfish in our basic nature.

In fact it's precisely this waywardness and corruption that God has to contend with on a daily basis in his family, and the fact that he works with us despite our failures shows the supreme love and patience that God has with us.

An Unapproachable Jesus?

So don't you, when looking at the opposition Jesus is having to put up with as he travels from place to place, see in him almost superhuman qualities of patience? Don't you find it beyond understanding that a man could tolerate endless hostility, disrespect and that kind of shattering loneliness that you only get from loving someone that doesn't understand you. Jesus is supposed to be approachable, a man like one of us, but I find him almost unapproachable. He always endures, always *has a patient measured temperament*, never *loses it*, he always *has time for others* even at those moments when all he wants is time to himself. It's easy to see Moses or David or Sarah or Jonah or Peter or the prodigal son as examples for us, they made mistakes, they got angry, depressed, they moaned, despaired and they too were faithless and wrong sometimes, but how can we look to Jesus as an approachable example of someone to copy. I don't know about you, but somehow I lose sight of him, as I look up to him, so far above, he is lost in the unobtainable clouds of the fullness of deity... So how do we connect with such an amazing man and bring him closer, it can't be just that he's a man, there are a lot of people we don't connect with!

A Rechargeable Jesus

The answer is not to ask ourselves how we can minimise Jesus, but how we maximise ourselves. What was His secret? Where did *his* strength come from? Can we do that? There's no mystery *there*, we aren't left to wonder. We read: He said to his disciples:

“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

And

“‘After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.’”

And

“‘Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.’” And yet again

“‘Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down.’”

All in the last chapter or two. Jesus’ worked, and then he recharged, he seized moments to be alone with God, and when the crowds pressed in, he turned to them. We are left to wander how he found peace enough to sleep. Indeed we read that there were so many people coming and going that he and his disciples couldn’t eat, and in the end, he ended up feeding the 5000, so at least they were able to eat then. So the question we must ask ourselves is whether we too work in the same stages of working for God, and then talking with God.

A Jesus Who Prayed

We wonder don’t we, what his recharging prayers would have contained? We know what ours are about. Please help me to love you Lord. Please forgive me. I’m sorry. Please help me not do that again. Thank you for sending me that moment. For this food. Should we venture a guess at what Jesus said, we feel he would have been thanking God for bringing to him all those lost sheep of Israel he so desperately wanted to save. Thanking God for showing his mercy and kindness to them all. Thanking God that He had the privilege of being able to perform these acts of healing, of creation. Asking God for the strength to meet the needs of those who were already on their way to him. Asking God to open the hearts of his disciples, to be with them as they learned a new way to serve God so different from the Law. Praying for patience, to be able to spend more time with his father. Praying if it were possible that there would be no betrayal from Judas, no judgment against Israel, no destruction,

“‘yet not my will but yours be done.’”

And immediately it was back to God’s work. Surrounded by the thoughts and feelings of those around him. He moved like the Rock of the wilderness, from place to place, with the water of God’s righteousness flowing through him, then recharging his reserves in prayer (establishing himself firmly). The question we ask ourselves, is how lonely is it possible for a person to be, if you are so surrounded by people so very different from yourself? Exactly how does this so often neglected thing called prayer, come to the rescue? Well prayer comes to the rescue because by reflecting on what you’ve done, what you want to be different, what you are grateful about... you get back in touch with what your purpose is, and from where you receive everything you need. And you get back in touch with God through humility, by reminding yourself that you are here to give Him pleasure, that your life isn’t your own. Jesus wasn’t there to please himself. Just like the best Kings of history, he’s there to carry the burden of serving his people. And our lives are the same, we’re not here to figure out how to make more money or get that better job, or fix the car, or a hundred other mundane things that press on us from every side. That stuff matters a bit, but not a lot. We are here to be transformed and to transform others by example. To identify how we are not measuring up, and what to do about it. And it starts with saying the word. Father. Father. That which

represents to each one of us, the idea of Strength. Authority. Kindness. Discipline. He who provides our needs. By realising we are in a power-responsibility relationship with a Father figure, and not just any father figure, but an all-knowing father who gets disappointed and angry, and who wants us to succeed and gets jealous for us when we betray him. We realise how small we are. And that we are here to play a small part. It doesn't matter that it's a small part. The Universe is a big place, and we are small. But it's the part we have been called to play. And we have to look around and acknowledge our surroundings, and notice what we have power to achieve for our Father, what would make *Him* happy.

A Selfless Jesus

For Jesus it was giving all of himself to every lost sheep, and being prepared to walk hundreds of miles to do it. Come what may. However hard. Being ready to square up to the Pharisees, blinded by power. Being ready to pour his compassion on all the sick and dying. So that's where our purpose, our responsibility and our strength and power comes from. It comes from finding those pockets of peace in our lives, which at the moment we probably fill with checking facebook, or emails or crosswords or whatever, which we should be filling with humble sentences beginning with the word Father. As I child I remember the peace I used to feel while singing the hymn: "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you".

“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

A Jesus At Peace

So Jesus isn't worrying, instead he has a God given purpose, to call the lost sheep of Israel, a fact his prayers remind him of, so in verse 24, he starts his journey out from the NW corner of the Sea of Galilee, and goes Northwards, to a region outside of Israel, in modern day Lebanon. Perhaps if goes far enough, he can finally shake off those annoying Pharisees as well as the murderous Herod. In fact in the coming months he goes way up North, much further than he needs to, 25 miles further north than is required. Also when he visits Decapolis he doesn't go directly down south to those cities, he goes way out East, and approaches these cities from the East rather than from the North. And all of this across arduous mountainous terrain. Jesus is going to use the extra time spent in this circuitous route, in the next few months, to teach his disciples. They still have a lot to take in. He must spend isolated non-stop time to change their hearts and minds from being Law (of Moses) abiding, literal minded Jewish men, trailing behind their Rabbi, into independent children of the New Covenant responsible for running a new and persecuted church.

His Disciples Recognise Jesus As Christ

As Matthew 14 records, verse 32:

“And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’”

The disciples have been brought to the place where they have recognised who they are travelling with, but there are roller-coaster times ahead as Jesus travels in the valley of the shadow of death, towards his death. Much like King David and his little band. Jesus has a small and faithful band, a little kernel of the new kingdom to start this completely new era. And it is always a *little* band isn't it. Always the despised anti-establishment group. Based on long forgotten virtues - forgotten by the ruling classes at any rate - virtues like self-control, love and kindness, faith, gentleness and non-violence, justice, goodness and mercy. You can see how dangerous a man like this would be to anybody who loves power and wants to exercise it over others, to any religion, political or secular group that has set up structures to dominate others and live ostentatiously and parasitically off their subjects, in glittering respect, fine clothes and with the respect of others. During this journey in Gentile land his disciples will see Greek influenced cities full of statues of Hercules, Dioecious, Dimitar, a society devoted to false gods. But in this parched spiritual ground, there will be less frenetic clamour for him, and therefore more time for his disciples.

A Gentile Recognises Jesus As Christ

But just as Jesus comes into Tyre and wants to spend this time with his disciples, he can't avoid attention, and a Gentile woman hears of him, and immediately sets off. She comes to the house, and cries out at the door:

“‘Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.’”

As a man, who has literally healed crowds of people, isn't this all he needs to hear? “I accept your authority, and that you are the Son of David, I need your mercy as my daughter is suffering in a way that no one else can help with” Non-Jews were considered so unspiritual that even being in their presence could make a person ceremonially unclean. It was certainly not the done thing to talk to a woman in public and she herself was breaking taboos by being there.

Much of Jesus' ministry, however, involves turning expectations and prejudices on their heads. And yet, in a strange turn of events, Jesus does what people would expect of a Rabbi, and we read

“Jesus did not answer a word.”

Now this is not the same as saying “Jesus ignored her completely” he is just not giving her the answer she wants or when she wants it, which is often our experience with prayer too, and you might ask, If it's a gift that I'm asking for, why should I get an answer when I want it, and why should it be the answer I want. It seems fairly reasonable that the answer might be ‘no’ or ‘not yet’. But the hardest answer is often silence, it's so hard that it's used as a weapon by some people. But we wouldn't expect that of Jesus, so what does his silence

mean? It means, “I want you to fill this space.” Because after all silences are like spaces, and they want to get filled. But what do you fill this silence with? With faith. All spiritual silences are supposed to be filled with faith. And they (his disciples) don’t, but she does.

We read

“Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, ‘Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.’”

They were still thinking humanly, literally. Here’s a woman descended from our enemies, who won’t stop asking for a favour. Who is she to ask for that? And look, the Son of God isn’t answering her, so we will prompt him to do what we feel sure he wants to do, but hasn’t for some reason.

A Silent And Surprising Jesus

The woman has obviously asked a number of times, begged him, but is maintaining her distance, so the disciples are acting as mediators here, until eventually, Jesus answered:

“‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.’ The woman came and knelt before him. ‘Lord, help me!’ she said. ‘First let the children eat all they want,’ he told her, ‘for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.’ ‘Lord,’ she replied, ‘even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.’ Then he told her, ‘For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.’ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. So *her* faith only increased in the face of silence, and she came in and knelt before him. An act of humility and repentance. You don’t kneel before a kind man out of fear or selfishness, you kneel out of humility and recognition of their goodness. It’s an act of worship.”

But her faith wasn’t that she came in and knelt before Jesus. Her faith was that she *left*. And she left quietly without arguing, without trying to get proof. Without even a hint of surprise or a questioning look so far as we are told. Think about the faith it takes to believe your daughter has been healed, when nothing has been “*done*” that remotely resembles a normal procedure. How would you feel at his statement?

“you may go, the demon has left your daughter”

you *might* think, “not so fast! I’ve heard that a hundred times before, and they mixed up hens blood and expensive flowers and brewed a poultice first... And anyway, I know your disciples wanted me to leave from the very start, and you weren’t that interested, I know what’s going on here. I’ve got an idea, why don’t you come along with me, and I’ll make you some food at my house. (you can heal her there)” How did she feel walking back? How far was it? Was she with anyone who cast doubts in her mind as she walked? We learn from Job that friends aren’t that great at helping you in your faith sometimes. Just what were her thoughts as she walked? Did she dance for joy like the demoniac Jesus had told to go and tell all that was done for him? Was she head-down, quietly expectant? Was she joyful, as faith would dictate? What’s the point of believing in a powerless God after all, or

His Son that lies to you? Well we imagine that she had a quiet spirit, but one full of tears of expectation don't we? In keeping with her being described as a woman of great faith. May *we* all learn how to be this faithful! Now remember we said, she was at the door and the disciples were acting as mediators. When she left in faith, *they were left standing there*. They had been wrong to get involved. They had been smugly pleased with Jesus' statement "I have been sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" - you tell her Jesus! But then when she ran in and fell down on her knees right at the very feet of Jesus. This time she dropped the begging plea and the messianic title, and with the sobbing screams of her child still ringing in her ears, in bold simplicity she knelt before Jesus and reduced her request to a basic cry of

'lord - help me'

The simplest of prayers. the ultimate prayer, the one that we are all reduced to when we reach the boundary of what we can cope with. How did the disciples feel then?

A Jesus That Works With Us As He Finds Us

They were too quick to judge, as the ones chosen by Jesus, why had they decided to deny her, when after all Jesus had only been silent? It was because they had matters of protocol, and purity, and protection, practicality and precedent on their minds. Not faith mercy and love. Jesus left the silence to increase her fervour to the point where she was bursting with faith, then he had challenged her, and she pushed back, now she could walk away in faith, with her daughter healed, he had wanted that outcome from the very start.

He also left a silence to bring the disciples prejudices to the surface. To teach *them*. I'm sure in times of silence they thought back on what she said, and on her faith. Just like when the woman was caught in adultery, when Jesus uses silence to reduce the urgency and fervour of the mob, here he uses silence to confirm the woman's faith, and the disciples wrong focus. And so if our prayers aren't answered, we know what to *do*. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, so we also know what to *read*. The healing of a Gentile's daughter is a warning to us, that Jesus prefers loving inclusivity to purity of protocol, and that if we are going to mediate for God, we should probably do so only after a period of reflective humble silence of our own, filled with increased faith and meditation on God's word. Sometimes the answers really are that obvious. (note: wonderful how much you can see in a simple story, maybe this is why all the books couldn't contain it. It's an example of "do you love me?" 'Yes lord' "feed my sheep" but it's also an example that many people throughout history may well have called on the Lord in a similar manner, in prayer, and while not members of the body, they may well have had their prayers answered. Now as an aside, some people have objected to the fact that while Jesus talks to her, he compares Jews to Children while Gentiles get to be dogs, but let's take a moment to consider that Jesus's proven track record is as a loving man, anyone who suggests Jesus is being racist here, is probably barking up the wrong tree, and they should call off the dogs, while we do know that the Greek word is "pet dog" or "little dog" which doesn't help much, and we do know that gentiles were seen as unclean because of their cultural practises, we also can't expect to understand this idiom 2000 years after the event, and across 3 languages. Insisting that our

interpretation of a single word is correct, while ignoring Jesus' lovely character, is probably a step too far and we should let sleeping dogs lie. Jesus' bark is just probably worse than his bite, so let's recognise, that he made the point clearly in plain language first: His mission was to the Jews and to him they were "top dog" and the gentiles were not his concern. After all there was a whole world of Gentiles out there, he had not visited them either.)

Now we read

"Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them,"

Imagine yourself there with him looking out and down over the shimmering sea, and as you watch, many crowds (as the greek suggests), approach from different directions, But these are no ordinary crowds, they move strangely, slowly, they shuffle in pain and suffering, I imagine the scene like some post-nuclear holocaust survivor scene.

"The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel."

This was the backdrop to what happened next.

"friends brought a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hands on him."

Now someone deaf from birth will have trouble forming words, as if you cannot hear them, you cannot form them perfectly and we are told this was the case with this man. In Jewish culture he would have been classed as insane, the Rabbis contending that it couldn't be told what he understood. In a Gentile land it would have been much worse. He would have been executed in many cultures. In Jewish culture it would have been felt that he was under God's curse, that his problems were the result of someone's sin.

The pharisees would have treated the man with disdain. So this man stigmatised and despised, living a lifetime of rejection, was flung at Jesus feet as they implored him to lay his hands on him. To touch him.

A Clean Jesus

This is what Jesus did, he touched the unclean. Jesus took him aside by himself. Aside from the crushing crowd. Has this man ever known such personal treatment being treated as a human? Then Jesus begins to speak to him in sign language, in four signs:

1. He put his fingers into his ears. To say to the man, I know whats wrong. I will heal that
2. Spitting, he touched his tongue with the saliva. I will heal that
3. He looked up to heaven. This power comes from on high. God will heal you.
4. And with a deep sigh (a silence), the non-verbal communication of sympathy, of tender strong emotion, of thanks to God, to be prepared for what is coming.

“‘Ephphatha! Be opened.’”

In an instant his ears were opened and he began to speak plainly. Can you really understand what has happened here? Most did not. The man was able not just to hear but to understand language, he can hear, understand and speak it. He knew what the words were. Everything was implanted in his brain. Our personalities, non-verbal communication, all are defined by our interaction with people over time. And the man is unable *not* to speak. It just tumbles out of him. And Jesus gave him orders not to tell anyone. I mean come on, he has spent his life unable to speak or communicate and now that he has the most to say and the most reason to say it, Jesus says. Yeah but if you could just keep schtum that would be great. An excruciating command, that we wouldn't expect him to obey, and he didn't. But Jesus' massive ability to heal wasn't the story he wanted told. He was on his way to Jerusalem to be crucified and resurrected. After that, he ordered his disciples to go throughout the all the world and heal and teach. (perhaps if the man had remained silent all that time, perhaps he would have been so bursting with desire, he would have been part of *that*, perhaps he was?) The people were utterly astonished. They had their minds blown and *they* couldn't keep it quiet and they spread it everywhere.

A Creator Jesus

They said Jesus has done all things well. Perfectly. His miracles. Deaf, lame, mute, demon possessed. He spoke and it happened.

“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.”

“And God saw that it was good”

We are watching here the beginning of the New Creation in those he preached to, in his disciples. Not just new arms, ears, legs, feet and hands, but hearts and minds, and it was all “very good”. Don't concern yourselves with any mundane thing. Instead let's seek the kingdom first. And perhaps we too will find in this, our purpose, and be transformed and transform by example. We don't have long to go. Our journey with christ and his small band of disciples towards his crucifixion this morning, has shown Christ to be a towering, almost unobtainable example, always about his Father's work.

Jesus the fierce protector of the freedoms he is about to buy at great cost to himself. *Jesus the family man*

“Who is my mother and my brothers?”

Jesus the inclusive

“Israel wasn't the ends of Salvation, but the means of salvation to those other nations.”

Jesus the epic healer, a man of massive unending demonstrable power.

Jesus the Saviour

Jesus the Creator of a New Creation.

Jesus the one who withdrew to pray.

Jesus The Willing Offering

Humanly, unlike King David, as Jesus travelled on to Jerusalem, there will a coronation only of thorns, a royal disrobing, and being struck through with the spear of jealousy, the spectre of the valley of death becomes a reality. Or so it seems.

We see a willing man whose entry into Jerusalem prefigures that which is to come: a man always clothed in pure white, a man with a crown of righteousness whose victory in battle came at the precise moment he was weakest, a man who was never overpowered, but who overcame evil with good, for whom the spear meant proof of his triumph, a man too Holy for the grave.

“Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.”

Let's remember with all focus on Jesus now, what suffering it took, to make this future vision a reality.