

Rev. Dan Welch Pentecost 16

9-9-18 Text- Mark 7: 31-37

Did you know that Jesus Christ has an Instagram account? Yes, it's true! Sadly, He only has about a million and a half followers, (1.7 mil). That's just a drop in the bucket compared to the more than 141 million followers for actress and singer Selena Gomez and just a shade over 114 million for the wrestler turned actor Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. Former President Barack Obama comes in with a respectable 16.5 million, while current President Donald Trump lags behind with only 8.3 million followers.

Instagram, short for instant telegram, is a photo and video social networking service. In addition to staying connected with your family and friends, when you follow someone like Taylor Swift or Kim Kardashian on Instagram, you're able to keep up with their daily activities and their views on a host of topics of varied importance. It's similar in that regard to Twitter and Facebook. Yes, social media has given people un-precedented access to the lives and thoughts of leaders from the world of politics and pop culture. For many of these individuals, social media gives a beloved platform through which they let their voices be heard. So they seek as much attention as they can get in an effort to get more

followers.

2. Based on our Gospel for today, it's safe to assume Jesus wouldn't have had much interest in Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook in His day. Rather than seeking the attention and the praises of the crowds, we find Jesus doing just the opposite. He takes the deaf and mute man off to the side, **away** from the crowd, before restoring him. Then after the miracle, Jesus tells the witnesses **not** to tell anyone. It's pretty bizarre behavior! Why perform this amazing miracle in private and tell them not to tell anyone about it? But Jesus isn't concerned about the crowds. He **is** concerned about the one. In this particular case it's the one deaf, mute man.

Jesus is so different from the famous people of our day. They all have Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and even Snapchat accounts, from our current president to every pop star under the sun. They want to be heard and followed, but they also don't want to be bothered, and they definitely want their boundaries. Our Lord is the One Who tried to get away to a quiet place with His disciples, only to find that the people had gone ahead of them and beaten them there. Instead of turning the crowds away Jesus has compassion on them. He shows that same compassion to the deaf and mute man. Jesus is always concerned for

the one hurting and needy person.

Jesus isn't concerned with attracting huge crowds, and very often Mark notes Him fleeing from them. He also is the same Jesus in private as He is in public. What you see is what you get with Jesus. Elsewhere in Mark's Gospel we see how Jesus is just as concerned for the woman with the discharge of blood as He is for the daughter of the synagogue ruler. He's the same Jesus when He's alone with Peter, James, and John as when He's with the thousands who ate the loaves and fish. He's the same Jesus when the soldiers strike Him and when the criminals insult Him. He's the same Jesus always and forever.

Jesus' concern for the deaf and mute is also a deep-seated love and concern for **you**. The One who touched the unclean and associated with tax collectors, prostitutes, and even Gentiles is concerned for **you** and the hurts and pains **you** bear. The one who looked the deaf and mute man in the eyes and touched His fingers to the man's tongue comes also to you with His mercy and love to forgive and restore you. He still comes to open ears and release tongues, and He sets us free through the baptismal waters and the commanding Word. He's concerned for the one who's held in bondage to addiction and the one who's been broken by guilt. Through

the forgiving word of Absolution, He still frees those who are held captive by their past. What a comfort this is for those who feel forgotten and alone. There are certainly crowds who are amazed by Jesus during his earthly ministry, but this reading from Mark reminds us that His bigger concern is for each and every person.

1. That's just the kind of Lord Jesus is! He does all things well! From obeying His parents to submitting to the law of the land, Jesus is always the dutiful servant. As teacher, He teaches His hearers what is good, right, and true. As King, He shows mercy to the least and the lowest. As Savior, He comes to rescue those who are lost and forgotten. Jesus can only do good because He is God, and God is good. So, wherever He goes, He does what is good and pleasing to His heavenly Father. He always submits to the Father's will, which we confess is a good and gracious will. At the end of His creating, God the Father looked back over all He'd made and said that it was good. It was good because God can only do that which is good. After Jesus restored the deaf and mute man, the people proclaimed: "He does all things well." **Of course** He does all things well, because He is God.

And He doesn't stop doing things well. He did it right up unto the end as He cried out from the cross, "It is

finished.” He had completed the work of His re-creation, and looking back over what He’d done, He declared that His work was complete and that it is good. He still keeps on doing good as He strengthens the weak and comforts the sorrowful and shows mercy to the forsaken and gives forgiveness to those who feel sorrow for their sins.

We need to be reminded regularly that Jesus Christ does all things well. When we suffer all kinds of hardships and difficulties, our Lord is *still* doing all things well. When the treatments don’t bring the healing for which we hoped, our Lord continues to do all things well as He grants us the grace to endure the suffering. When we look around the world and see violence and terror, hunger and disease, we are comforted in knowing that our Lord is continuing to do all things well. He continues to accomplish His good and gracious will as His Word is proclaimed, as the saints of God serve in their daily callings, as the sick receive healing through doctors serving as God’s instruments, and as the hungry are fed by the service of countless hands. Seeing evil in the world does not mean Christ Jesus is not doing all things well anymore. On the contrary, in this evil world, He continues to break and hinder the plans of the devil and the world as He carries out good through His

holy ones wherever and however they serve, usually without notice or fanfare. But Jesus also does things well when He shows you your own sins and your own rebellion. He does all things well as you are called to repentance and as He forgives you all your sins for the sake of His death on the cross.

Our Lord Jesus Christ did all things well during His earthly ministry, but He *continues* to do all things well as His Word is proclaimed and as the Church, His Body, serves as His hands and feet of service in the world. As our Lord does all things well, He still shows care and concern for each person in need.

Jesus Does All Things and Each Person Well. May His loving-kindness and concern bring comfort and peace to you as you endure suffering in this world *and* as you look forward to Jesus’ final good work of bringing us to the Father in the resurrection on the Last Day. Amen.