

“He Has Done Everything Well!”

† Why such suffering? (vv.31-32)

† Why such sighing? (vv.33-35)

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In the name of Jesus, the kind and gentle Friend of sinners, dear fellow heirs of life eternal:

Did you notice the Q/A article in the last issue of *Forward in Christ*? Our church provides this magazine for our members, but our visitors might also appreciate knowing that the website listed on the second page of our bulletin each week gives you direct access to answers from our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professors. One question aimed at Professor Richard Gurgel demanded he save his energy and not answer from the Bible because according to the questioner it’s just a dusty old book of myths and legends. Professor Gurgel’s kind and patient response is classic: Shall we answer then with human opinion – my opinion, or the “experts” who said one thing years ago and differently today? As my son asked in grade school when he overheard a woman criticizing me for “proof-passaging,” “Dad, where else should we get our doctrine but from the Bible?” Isn’t that what Peter asked when everyone else went away and Jesus wondered if the Twelve would too? **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”** (John 6:68f NIV)

Non-Christians generally assume we Christians never wonder about these things. But all Jesus’ disciples have doubts and fears. In the midst of hardship and suffering doesn’t today’s sermon theme become a question: **“He Has Done Everything Well?”** we ask. “If God is love, then **Why such suffering?** If Jesus actually has the power to help, **Why such sighing?** If everyone should know, **Why such silence?**” Today the dear Holy Spirit wants to change that question mark into a period and even an exclamation mark. **“He Has Done Everything Well!”** Let’s look at Jesus and ask first of all:

† **Why such suffering?** (vv.31-32)

“Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.”

You may not realize how our pastoral training in the WELS requires a Bachelor of Arts degree before entering our Seminary. Humanities and the study of history is a major part of this, only we get to read the ancient works in Hebrew and Greek, or in Latin like Virgil’s *Aeneid*, or Caesar’s *Gaelic Wars*. English translations of world classics round out a great education in the best works of the greatest human minds of literature. And you know what? None of it is like the Bible. Ancient myths and legends always make the hero greater than life and extol his accomplishments and victories. But not the Bible.

Read the Gospel of Mark for example. The first seven of sixteen chapters with power works and miracles show why is Jesus coming from the northern Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon. Why does He bypass the population centers of the Jews and go to the far side of the Sea of Galilee into another Gentile area of the “Decapolis,” Ten Cities (Latin), with independent rights under Roman occupation? Answer: Jesus’ cousin, John the Baptist, has been beheaded by King Herod. The crowds that wanted to force Jesus to be their Bread-King after He fed 5,000 have dissipated since Jesus’ *Bread of Life Discourse* about the necessity of believing in Him alone. Jesus is **suffering** long before He reaches the cross. This is different from ancient hero literature, especially in the fact that Jesus left heaven to suffer all this. And our **suffering** like this deaf mute, the Bible alone traces back to the rebellion of our first parents. Man is the culprit; God comes to suffer. **Why such suffering?** The Bible alone answers: our sin, God’s love.

‡ Why such sighing? (vv.33-35)

Look again at Jesus. *“After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. He looked up to heaven...with a deep sigh...”* Such details are not necessary in made-up stories. But it is essential for God the Holy Spirit to communicate God’s truth by the miracle of verbal inspiration which the Bible alone claims. Religious books like the Muslim *Koran* or *The Book of Mormon* only claim an angel told Muhammad or Joseph Smith what to write. But the Bible claims to come directly from God through His chosen writers. And Jesus’ **sighing** gives insights into the heart of God unparalleled in other literature, ancient or modern.

My Savior’s **sighing** is one of a million details that convince me the Bible is the Word of God. Just as *“Jesus wept”* (John 11:35) at the tomb of His friend Lazarus, even as our Lord was distressed and angry at the stubborn unbelief of His fellow Jewish religious leaders (Mark 3:5), so He who came to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4) felt the pain and suffering this deaf mute had endured in real life griefs and heartaches. We cannot begin to imagine the depth of Jesus’ **sighing** because we only feel our own pain, and then, only for a little while. But the eternal Son of God, the God-Man Jesus Christ, personally feels our pain in afflictions until all the suffering of His Church is filled up. (Colossians 1:24) In a certain sense our exalted Lord Jesus still suffers, not for our salvation which stands completed on the cross (*tetelestai* – John 19:30), but in destroying death itself and bringing us into our eternal heavenly home with God. Our groans and sighs are still His own. No idol or superstitious tradition says that.

After all the things God has done for me, I surely have no reason whatsoever to question or doubt His power and His love. The fact that I do – And go ahead and admit it with me, so do you. – all this is proof that we continue to sin day-by-day, hour-by-hour and would surely earn for ourselves nothing but God’s wrath and eternal punishment. Why do we have to be told to praise our Creator? Why do we tolerate the billions-of-years evolutionistic opinions which are just another religion and nowhere close to science? Our sins cause our own sighing, but Jesus is still **sighing** today because He embodies God’s love and power to say, *“Ephphatha!” (which means, “Be opened!”)*. *At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.* What about us? Do we still ask...

‡ Why such silence? (vv.36-37)

Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.” We’ve already heard the answer about then. In their utter amazement people still did not believe Jesus came to suffer and die in order to supply the heroic Jewish Messiah, God’s Champion over sin, death and hell. This Christ was promised from the beginning through the Jewish prophets also inspired by God the Holy Spirit with the very words He wanted them to write. Jesus’ own disciples saw His miracles and got angry like Peter at talk of the cross. Jesus had a job to do to save us from our sins. He would not let popularity keep Him from suffering in our place.

The only real question is, **Why such silence** among us? We have been commanded to witness Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior to the ends of the earth. Why is it easier for most men to talk about sports, cars, work, whatever, than to say that everyone needs the Savior God’s own Son with perfect love and total power over death itself? Do you have a rifle of that caliber? Your team “weapons” on the court or grid iron, do they match this? Why is it easier for our women to invite friends to social events than worship services in honor of Jesus Christ our loving Lord who set us free from frantic busyness and the heartache of human relationships? Jesus surely loves us with an everlasting love. But do we love Him enough beyond this church building to break the **silence** of our own fears and shine His light through the fog of human opinion all around us? To light the way to heaven **“He Has Done Everything Well!”** That exclamation mark can only show in holy lives, kind and loving Christian character, and the untiring witness of those who know Jesus personally as Lord and Savior. Dearest Lord, sweep away our questions and empower us with your love and faithfulness on your way to eternal excellence. Amen!