

Mark 7 He has done all things well

Have you ever caught yourself wondering: Was Jesus like the best dodgeball player on his school team? Was he the best carpenter? He is true God, after all. But then, as we know, He is true man. He got tired, he got hungry, he got thirsty. He probably couldn't, according to his humanity, lift a gigantic boulder, somewhat answering the riddle – could God make a rock so large he couldn't lift it? And if he couldn't lift it, is it fair to say, that some other man who trained, may have been able to lift more than him? Perhaps a man named Simon of Cyrene who carries a cross for him? And if other men could carry more, for a variety of reasons, could other kids play dodgeball better than him?

And yet here in our reading the people proclaim, and I think Mark records this particular line because he agrees with them, the people proclaim: “he has done all things well.”

*All things. Dodgeball?*

And forgive me, I'm not trying to be flippant, I do think this is important. Important because it informs who he is and what he came to do.

And if I cut to the chase, perhaps I will just say it: That yes, he does ALL things well, which means that if he ever played dodgeball, he did it “well.” But that doesn't mean he won every game or never got hit, not at all. I do think it means he played his games, dodgeball or whatever games kids in the first century played, he played them faithfully, joyfully, honestly, without sin.

And I would say the same for his carpentry work. He did it “well.” Doesn't mean it was the most intricate in the world, no, but I guarantee it was done honestly, faithfully, for the good of his guardian Joseph, for the good of the customer.

Jesus is the sinless one. And this of course, again, stirs up in our minds visions of him being the perfect child floating a foot off the ground, with everyone staring and in awe of him. And perhaps yes, we with our kids, we might stare in awe at them should they by some miracle play a game for 5 minutes without fighting – but you know I am exaggerating there, don't you?

Because the point with this silly daydream is this: We have little indication he was seen as some magic boy. And more to the point of this sermon: we have no indication that he used his divine powers to win the soccer game, or, less flippantly, again forgive me, to serve himself in any way.

Because that is not why he came. He came not to be served, but to serve. Mark 10:45

Now yes, we might recall his visit to the temple where he astounds the teachers and the scribes. Here, yes, is where he shines as the Word of God made flesh, yes his knowledge of the Word is a part of Him, it is who he is. But that is a far cry from hexing kids on the playground because they cheated.

And we may recall that after his ministry begins, when the crowds want to kill him, he “passes through their midst” as they argue. But please recognize, this is not to spare himself for a life of luxury, but so that he might find his way, not to safety, but to a cross to win salvation for all.

Which hopefully brings us out of my daydreams about dodgeball, back to why he came to serve and to save, and how he does that well.

Now then... Our reading today is a complicated one already, without my flippant philosophizing and speculation about his youth. It's complicated because unlike many of his other healings: why the spit? Why the sigh? Why the secrets?

And if I may offer some brief suggestions: The spit - because God often works through means, even though we know he doesn't have to! As if to show us that even now, through sinful people, through word and language, through water and bread and wine, he will still give his gifts through means according to his word. Why would we look elsewhere for gifts that last? The ads, the distractions, the cares and worries, they are there, for sure, but none offer anything near as "well" as Jesus and His Promises, his spit and some mud are better than anything the world has to offer – what about His Blood and the cleansing waters of baptism? Lets not take them for granted.

When he heals the man, he sighs. The commentaries go back and forth. Is it frustration at lack of faith or at the brokenness of the world? Is it passive-aggressive? Hardly, I'd say. Is it compassion at a man suffering long under the brokenness of the world? I lean that way. But whatever it is, it is certainly "human." An incarnational reaction to that which is in front of him, which shows us that he cares. This man is suffering, and that actually impacts Jesus. He reacts, he responds, he sighs. Do our sorrows impact him too? I think so. And then, as we read, he does something about it.

Which leads to the secret. It is no secret that Jesus is drawing attention, good and bad, now in his ministry. Here in the Decapolis, the ten cities, I bet the crowds are massive, and managing false expectations of who he is must be challenging. Notice he takes the man aside to heal him also. Probably for the same reason. "Let's make him King, let's make him King and we can come petition him for healing and bread... he would do that well. He does all things well, so if he is king, then, our problems with economy, the Romans... gone!"

Nope. Not why he came. Not to use his divine power to do those things well, to be so shortsighted, but to conquer greater foes. We are not immune to this, "Jesus why don't you heal

me, here and now, why don't you care?" Did he come to give you three more years of health? Or an eternity! He comes to undo death itself, for the world.

And this, this then is something the best of us could never do. This is why he must be true God. Because no one else is strong enough for this. No one else could do this well. A holy angel, a creature, could not redeem the creation of which it is a part. No. And so the omnipotent One will see to this.

And here again, we know this is why he must be true man, since he comes to redeem mankind. "That which is not assumed is not healed." Says, Gregory of Nazianzus. And so he becomes man to save mankind and so he, not in an ivory tower, so perfect so "better than us", no he comes to our mud and spittle and stands with us, and walks with us, and still comes to us. This is Jesus. True man, true God, with a lot more at stake than dodgeball.

Could this man, the one who makes the deaf hear, and the mute speak, as Isaiah prophesied... could this man be the Messiah, the One promised to win a mighty salvation and do it well?

Could he possibly overcome the immense weight of human failure, our failure? In the abstract, a history filled with human failure; to the concrete, we with our failures? We all have them. This man in our reading had them, his body was failing him, and even after the healing he failed to keep Jesus' simple command to keep it quiet. But, as we know, God would use that.

But don't mishear me. The hope in this brokenness is not found in God just twisting around our failures. It's found in his triumph over them, his goodness overcoming. Yes, he does all things well. So he carries the weight of human sin and failure, a weight far greater than some hypothetical boulder, and he is crushed under it. "Father into your hands I commit my spirit." He even dies well. And die he does according to that human nature. His heart fails.

But then the heart beats again, the lungs breathe again, the eyes open. Healed and whole. Death undone.

And he comes to the failures, his disciples, and does not scream at them, no, like a deaf and mute man, he has compassion on them. And he will use them as His Means to share the testimony of victory over death.

And that is a Word you have heard. His gifts, his sighing, his dying, his rising are all yours and still go out to the world.

Jesus is true God. He upholds the universe by his very Word, he could play dodgeball with the planets. He is true man, who, in his time in history, set aside his power and throne that he might serve us. That he might do what we could not. That he might make us his own. That he might defeat death for us. In the midst of brokenness and failures, in the midst of failing bodies, and sins and doubt, rest a little in Christ. His promises are yours, he will keep them, of course he will, he does all things well. Amen.