

Pastor T.C. Arnold
12th Sunday after Trinity
Mark 7:37
August 19th, 2018

And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

Pride is often defined as a feeling of deep pleasure derived from one's own achievements. If we do something well, pride makes us feel good about it. That's what pride does for the self. Pride could also be directed toward those who we love when they do something well... we take pride in their accomplishments. "That's my son, or, that's my daughter who did that." And we quickly post it on social media.

As you might imagine, pride can be both good and bad. Pride is a bit of a slippery slope because pride can motivate us to do something good for others... and sincerely put others first. Pride can also be directed outside of us... we are proud of our friends, our kids or parents, our co-workers... you fill in the blank. For example, St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:4: "*I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort.*" But pride has a dark side to it as well.

Pride can puff us up. Pride can make us think of ourselves as more than we are. Pride might hold us back when our neighbor needs us to be his helper. Pride might make us do things for personal gain that is sinful instead of useful. Pride might make us revel in the admiration of others and feel scorn toward someone else when that person is admired above us. St. John gives us a word to consider regarding the negative aspects of pride when he says, "... *the desires of the eyes and pride of life is not from the Father but is from the world.*" How we covet words about us from others that would make them be, "...*astonished beyond measure...*" And make them say, "*He does all things well.*" Oh yes! I could get used to that. I'm sure you could too.

The Gospel of Mark is my favorite Gospel. In this short Gospel, Mark does not mince words. He goes from one miraculous deed done by Jesus to the next. You hear how Jesus casts out a demon in one chapter and then it says, he immediately went to the next town and healed a sick person. If you just read the Gospel of Mark you might think Jesus was some sort of superhero who has come to rescue the world with his superpowers. He goes around raising the dead and feeding the hungry. No wonder when people saw Him they were astonished beyond measure. No wonder when they see what He has done, they say, "*He has done all things well.*" He did do all things well. And what they saw was truly astonishing.

In the text for today, Jesus heals that deaf, mute man by looking up into heaven and speaking that word that literally means be opened. It's as if Jesus is saying, "Be opened, heaven, and come down upon this poor man and heal him of his affliction." Be opened, ears, and hear the Word of God. Be opened, mouth, and speak the Lord's Gospel so that other ears may hear what you say... how you can speak from experience that God made you hear... that God caused you to speak... how you had nothing to do with what you received and that God in His mercy does all things well.

Here, Jesus not only gives us an example of His astonishing ability to reverse sickness, illness, and whatever else a person might be afflicted with, He also demonstrates to us that when He comes... and He does come... that we have been given unstopped ears. We have been given tongues to confess the name of Jesus. This is not only a picture of a man being healed, this is also a picture of you being healed... enabled to breathe out the words of eternal life. You who hear the Gospel plainly and clearly. You who are able to utter the words of the Gospel. This is not just a job for Jesus, though Jesus is at work through you. This is not just the job of your pastor, though the Savior, through the

work of the Holy Spirit accompanies every utterance from this place. This is Christ at work through you. And when you do great things by God's grace through faith, when you speak comforting words that point your neighbor to the cross of Christ, Jesus is the one to be honored and not you or me. In other words, there is no room for pride that puffs us up. There is no room for boasting because it was the Lord at work. You are the tool and Jesus is the master carpenter.

On the lighter side... there's an old fable about two ducks and a frog who lived in a farmer's pond. The ducks and the frog were the best of friends; they played together all day long. But when the hot summer days came, the pond began to dry up. The ducks realized that they would have to move. They could easily fly away to another place, but what about their friend, the frog?

Finally the ducks decided to put a stick between them. Each would hold one end in its bill while the frog hung on the stick by its mouth. So the three friends set out for another pond. As they were flying, the farmer saw them and said, "Who clever! I wonder who thought of it." The frog said, "I did." And that was the end of the frog. The old proverb holds true, "Pride goes before the fall."

Lest you forget who gave you all that you have... Lest you forget who blessed you with the talents you have been given... lest you forget who gave you your children, the family that you have the opportunity to brag on, your job, your skillset to accomplish whatever you are good at... remember... it was not your idea. The blessings we are blessed with come from God. Pride has us to forget this. Pride has us to be unthankful for our blessings. Pride is set before the fall of those who think that what they have is their own doing and are not willing to give credit to the one who has done it all.

Pride says you were the one who did it all when you receive unstopped ears and a loose tongue. Pride forgets about our neighbor's needs... the church's needs... that which comes from you to others. Beware of pride. Pride is a sin when it is self-serving above others and the gifts of the Lord. Pride in this way breaks the 1st Commandment – have no other God's beside me.

Rather, direct all pride to the one who does all things well. And though He gives us all the first article gifts (house and home, spouse and family), the main thing He did well for you is to come and die for you. There is no one better to take pride in than your Lord. In good times and in bad, take pride in your Lord. He is with you always to the very end of the age. That is His promise to you. That should make us proud.

And with that promise, we see how sinful pride is stymied by a God who came for no other reason than to forgive you. He did nothing for Himself... but everything for you. He was born for you, lived for you, did those miraculous things in the Gospel for you. He unstops ears and loosens tongues for you. He suffered everything you know about during Holy Week for you. Not for prideful gain but for every unselfish reason... so that you may live by grace through faith in Him and with Him throughout all eternity.

Have pride in the achievements of Christ. His pride is in you. His love is for you. His forgiveness is for you. Pride in Him and show the world that pride. It's funny, Christians are proud of our God who dies for His creation. The world would never be proud of that. The world prides in self. False religions only pride in a strong and all powerful god... not one that would humiliate Himself in death. But this shows you what kind of God we have. No one can mistake what He did for you as pride. The only thing we can say about that is... look how He loves us. He gave everything so that we might live. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.