

THE IMPOSSIBLE MADE POSSIBLE

In the name of him who does all things well, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

For almost a ¼ of a century now, you have been able to watch “Mission Impossible” movies; there are 6 total. If you’re into that mystery, action, espionage, incredible stunts and thrills – then you know what these films are about. Ethan Hunt finds himself in impossible situations; lives are at stake; national security is on the line; time is running out. From every angle imaginable – the situation is hopeless; Ethan will lose and the bad guy will win... until... in some amazing fashion, the seemingly impossible happens. Apparently, lots of people like this kind of story; it’s the 17th highest grossing movie series of all time – \$3.4 billion and counting.

People have always been drawn to this kind of story – and so is our Lord and God, but for different reasons. When God the Father sent his Son to earth, to be born of woman, born under law – he sent him on a mission that was truly impossible – for mankind. He did this not for the sake of the thrill and adventure, he did this out of mercy and compassion; he did this because “God so loves the world.” Today in our Gospel lesson the Holy Spirit shows us this mission of compassion and love so that we too might put our faith and hope in him who alone has the power to do the impossible. Listen again to the first 2 verses of our text: ³¹Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. ³²There 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.

I. It truly is Impossible – for us

The first verse of this text may not seem too exciting, but don’t overlook it. For Jews to interact with Gentiles would make them ceremonially unclean. (a continuation of last week’s Gospel about their superficial concerns about eating with unclean hands...) That didn’t bother Jesus. He came to seek and to save the spiritually unclean – and spiritually unclean people are everywhere. He just came from a place some 50 miles north of Galilee, healing a Gentile woman whose daughter was ill.

Jesus returns, but not directly into the Promised Land; he goes east of the Sea of Galilee, into the region of “the 10 Cities” founded by Alexander the Great. Roman governors are ruling there with their armies. Even though he was closer to Jerusalem, he was still in foreign land – which sets the stage all the more for God’s grace and power to shine. Jesus had been here before recently and had done the impossible. He cast demons out of a man and then, that healed man, at the behest of Jesus stayed behind and told others what God had done for him through Jesus. His witnessing was the reason why this group of people brought this deaf and mute man to Jesus. Martin Luther really sums up the impossible situation well:

That this poor man is hurt in this manner, that he can use neither tongue nor ears like other people, those are blows and thrusts of the accursed devil. Before the world it may seem, and everyone be of the opinion, that they be natural ailments; for the world does not know the devil that he does so much harm, makes the people mad and foolish, inflicts all manner of misfortune upon them, not only in body, but also in soul... But we Christians should deem such defects and infirmities nothing else but blows of the devil; he causes such distress on earth and does damage wherever he can. (LW 13a, 838)

Without a big show or amazing theatrics, Jesus tenderly took this man aside, away from the crowd. He didn’t want to cause any embarrassment. His ears were in need of healing, so Jesus’ hands touched his ears. His tongue was unable to communicate clearly, so Jesus’ fingers touched the man’s tongue. The man wouldn’t have been able to hear what Jesus was saying, so Jesus communicated to him that he was addressing his needs. Jesus looked up to heaven and sighed, for he knew these infirmities were the work of sin and Satan’s power in the world. How different things were from the Garden of Eden, and from what heaven will be. With a single Aramaic word, “*Ephphatha*” **Be Opened!** Jesus commanded the impossible!

“Be Opened!” Realize just how impossible these words are. This man had no power to do what Jesus asked. There were no doctors who could accomplish this impossible feat. Only Jesus, using the same power he created the entire universe with – accomplished the impossible. His ears were opened; he began to speak clearly.



It's an amazing, thrilling, captivating event – but no less has happened to you and to me. For us to believe in Jesus on our own... impossible! For us to realize that Jesus is our Savior on our own... impossible! For us to give ourselves faith... impossible! For us to raise ourselves from the spiritually dead state we were born with... impossible! For us to free ourselves from an eternity in the flames of hell... impossible! Jesus alone must do the impossible – and he has – through same power of His Word. Whether his Word came to you via a friend or as water was poured upon your head in the name of the Triune God... God did the impossible and opened your eyes, ears, hearts, mind... and gave you faith in Jesus! How can you and I not help but share this good news?

II. With Jesus all things are Possible – Let the Story be told

Speaking of sharing the good news – or not – some have quipped that Jesus couldn't stop the impossible – that is – he couldn't stop people from talking. ³⁶*Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it.* ³⁷*People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."*

It's somewhat of a curious command, but Jesus wasn't interested in being “the hero of the day.” He wasn't there to usher in a millennium of majesty, filling their bellies with free bread. He had come to be their Savior from sin – to accomplish that which is truly impossible for all mankind. He had come to do all things well. That little phrase they uttered certainly sums up the work of our Savior, doesn't it?

Did you catch the echo from the Garden of Eden? In Genesis 1:31, “*God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.*” God did all things well in the beginning; mankind's sin made it otherwise. Now, in Jesus, God was putting into effect His plan of reconciliation and restoration. It was good before, and it will be good again – but only through seemingly impossible means.

Jesus came to face a foe more cunning and vicious than one Ethan Hunt ever faced. Jesus faced the devil. Jesus faced death. Jesus endured the wrath of God for the sin of the world. He did that because his was a mission of mercy. He accomplished the impossible on the cross, in the tomb, and on Easter Sunday morning as he rose from the dead!

Unlike his request in region of the Decapolis, before he ascended Jesus specifically instructed his disciples to tell this story – and so we do. We tell others just how well Jesus has done and continues to do all things – and through the power of His Word – Jesus does the impossible – and he does it well as more souls are saved!

But what about the aches and pains... what about blindness and hearing loss... what about cancer treatments that don't work? Doesn't Jesus do all things well? Has God forgotten about my hour of need? The Apostle Paul himself dealt with a similar situation. Here are his words. ⁷*To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.* ⁸*Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.* ⁹*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor. 12)* God gave him a thorn, a difficulty, that kept Paul clinging to Christ every day. In his struggles, God surrounded him with his GRACE – His Love and Forgiveness, His Promises and Peace. God turned a perceived curse into blessing... even though the thorn remained, but only until his death.

When it comes to the thorns we are dealing with, it's important to remember that nowhere did God promise to instantly heal every single physical weakness this side of the grave. After the fall into sin, God told Adam of the painful toil he would have by the sweat of his brow. The perfect world that existed inside the Garden of Eden was gone. For us to think that we're entitled to a perfect little world without pain and sorrow, with disease and death – is yet another foolish trick and lie of Satan. What God has promised is to surround you with His Grace, and he does.

Friends, let us keep our ears clearly tuned in to God's promises, remembering that by his grace, we are members of the Church Militant. That means we are still fighting the battles against the old Evil Foe until we die. We live in a sinful world that is subject to decay. Only when that blessed Judgment Day comes, (or if God calls us home before then) then are we members of the Church Triumphant; then are we finally free from sin; then will the promises of Jesus be fulfilled; then will we clearly just how well Jesus has all things. Until that day, let us continue on confidently bringing ourselves and our friends to Jesus, so that he can yet again make the impossible – possible – through the power of His Almighty Word. Amen.

He HAS DONE
ALL THINGS
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