

When was the last time you were overwhelmed with amazement because someone in your life did something so great, so surprising, so wonderful - so much that you were just overwhelmed? The popular TV show "Extreme Makeover Home Edition" tears down someone's rundown old house and builds a new one in its place. And the show makes the owner stand across the street from the new house and he can't see it because a bus is blocking the way. Remember what they make the owner say? "Bus driver, move that bus!" And the bus moves and the person is overwhelmed with amazement, laughing and crying and running around and hugging people because he sees a nice new house standing where the old run-down house used to be.

This morning we see Jesus perform a miracle, and the Bible tells us that all the people there were overwhelmed with amazement, literally in the original Greek - astonished beyond all measure. Let's take a look at how Jesus treated the man who needed help, how Jesus helped the man and loved the man. And as we do that, we're going to see how Jesus treats us and helps us and loves us. Truly, Jesus does all things well.

Compassion may not be the first thing we think of when we read this story. We're told that people brought a man to Jesus who was deaf and could hardly talk. We're told that those same people then begged Jesus to place his hand on the man, believing that somehow or somehow the hand of Jesus could help. And we are told that Jesus did what the people asked. He took the man aside, put his fingers into the man's ears, spit and touched the man's tongue, spoke an Aramaic word meaning, "be opened," and the man's ears were opened and his tongue was loosened so he could speak plainly. It all happens so quickly, it is all told so matter-of-factly, that we might be inclined to just pass over it without marveling at the compassion in Jesus' heart that moved him to stop and help this man. But if we're inclined to ignore the compassion of Jesus, I'm sure that wasn't true of the man who was healed. He knew Jesus didn't have to stop and help him. Can you imagine how many other people had passed him by in life? We who can talk and hear can be very uncaring about those who can't. But not Jesus! He saw this man as a person with real needs and real feelings. He felt for him and wanted to help him. And look at the way Jesus helped him, the sensitivity of calling him aside so as not to make a spectacle out of him. Or what about the way Jesus touched his ears and his tongue so that the man wouldn't be afraid and would know something about what Jesus was doing? I can't imagine this man not being amazed at Jesus' compassion.

Compassion seems to be a rare commodity these days. It happens so often. You're frazzled because of some problem. You make a phone call to the people you think can help you and you hear: "Press 1 if you want information about our office hours. Press 2 if you would like information about your account. Press 3 if you would like to pay your bill. Press 4 if you would like to speak to a service agent." Then you listen to music for fifteen minutes during which you are reminded how important your phone call is until at last someone starts to speak to you. Living in an uncaring and impersonal world, it is easy to think that our Savior is that way. But nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible says about our Savior that "his compassions fail not, his mercies are new every morning." There is not a day that goes by, a morning that we

get up or a night that we go to bed when Jesus isn't filled with compassion for us. He knows and cares about our hurts and our heartaches, our sufferings and our sorrows. The Bible says that Jesus sympathizes with our weakness, our helplessness. Whether we're talking about our physical aches and pains or our spiritual struggles and strains, he looks at us and he understands what we're going through and is filled with compassion. Other people may not know or may not care what we are going through, but not Jesus. Other people may live their lives oblivious to the hurts we are experiencing, but not Jesus. Other people may pass us by, but not Jesus.

A little boy was asked to give the definition of a friend. He thought for a while trying to find just the right words and finally said, "A friend is someone who likes us even though he knows us." That definition may not be found in a dictionary, but isn't it a beautiful way to describe a friend? And isn't it a beautiful way to describe Jesus? He knows us! He knows our sins! He knows our ups and our downs. He knows our strengths and our weaknesses. He knows the messes we get ourselves into. He knows the problems we're facing. He knows every one of them, yet he still likes us. He looks at us and his heart goes out to us in love and pity and compassion. If every day we started out remembering that fact, we would never forget what a wonderful Savior Jesus is.

There's something else we want to remember every day about Jesus. We want to remember his almighty power. Admittedly, this probably isn't the first story that we would think of if we were thinking of Jesus' power. We know, for example, that with his almighty power Jesus calmed the storms that threatened the disciples on the Sea of Galilee. We know that with his almighty power he cast out demons and healed lepers and actually brought people back from the dead. In purely human terms, this probably wasn't one of Jesus' most spectacular miracles. But try telling that to the people who witnessed what Jesus did that day in the area of Decapolis. Or try telling that to the man who all of a sudden could hear and all of a sudden could speak clearly so that others could hear him and understand him. Those people couldn't get over Jesus' power. "They were overwhelmed with amazement." No one else on earth could enable that deaf man to hear. No one else could enable him to speak, but Jesus with his almighty power did it and it filled them with wonder. In fact, they couldn't stop talking about it even though Jesus told them not to. Isn't it sad the way we lose our sense of amazement at Jesus' almighty power? The Jesus who is our brother, the Jesus who loves us, the Jesus who came to be our Savior, the Jesus whose heart is filled with compassion for us is omnipotent. His power knows no limits. If he wanted to, he could move the Florida Everglades to an area around the Villages. He has the power to turn every pebble on our church property into a giant nugget of gold.

Perhaps more pertinent, he has the power to heal all of our diseases, to solve our problems, to ease our burdens and to erase our worries. He not only has that kind of power, he has used it in our lives. How many times have we been sick only to recover? How many times have we been rescued almost miraculously from car accidents? How many times haven't we landed safely in an airplane? How many times haven't we been shielded from the harm of floods, famines, tornadoes and hurricanes? How many of us aren't alive today because Jesus used his power through the hands of a surgeon to spare our lives? How many of us aren't able to see

today because Jesus used his power through the skill of a doctor to improve or protect our vision? Those things occur with such regularity in our lives that we forget they are all possible only because of his power. Granted, the Savior does not always use his power to relieve our problems or to keep them from us, but if he chooses to let the problem stay or the sorrows come, then always his strength is there in the midst of it. Always his power is there helping us cope and enabling us to bear the burdens of the day. Always he keeps his promise, "As your days, so shall your strength be." Think of that every day you get up and get going, your Almighty Savior promises to hold you up with his power and says, "Every day you live I'll give you the strength for it." The more we grasp that truth in faith, the more we will remember what a wonderful Savior Jesus is.

The final thought we want to dwell on this morning is that Jesus is also wonderful in his wisdom. Did you catch the way Jesus shows his wisdom in this story? Mark refers to it when he tells us that "Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone" about this miracle that he had just performed. Why would Jesus do that? Why would he tell people not to go around talking about the power and compassion they had just witnessed?. You see, this was a time in Jesus' ministry when everybody wanted him, but they wanted him for the wrong reasons. All they wanted was an earthly king, a miracle worker who would heal all their diseases; someone to fill their bellies with food, their banks with money and their land with peace. Jesus didn't want to fuel that kind of thinking so he "commanded them not to tell anyone." In his heavenly wisdom he knew that those people had a greater need than food on the table and money in the bank. They needed a Savior from sin. They needed someone who would lead them to repentance and bring them to heaven. They were only thinking about today and maybe tomorrow, but Jesus in his wisdom was thinking about eternity and their need to spend it with him. Don't you have to marvel at what a wonderful Savior Jesus is?

During the Second World War the lights of London were frequently turned off to keep the city in darkness for fear of the German airplanes and their bombs. One night as a young girl walked with her father through the darkened streets she turned to him and said, "Daddy, I never saw all the stars until the lights went out." Jesus knows that it is often that way in our lives also. In the broad daylight of prosperity, when everything is going our way, when health, wealth and good times flood our lives and fill our days, we tend to lose sight of the brilliance and beauty of God's Gospel promises, don't we? So Jesus in his wisdom lets dark days come into our lives, days that are maybe uncomfortable and unpleasant, but always it is so that we can see more clearly and appreciate more fully his spiritual and eternal blessings. What he does, we don't understand, but if we remember how much he loves us, how he even laid down his life for us, then we will let him lead knowing that in his wisdom he will lead us in a way that serves our good. Truly, Jesus does all things well. What a Wonderful Savior We Have!