

## **It Sure Looks Strange, but It Works**

Mark 7:31-37

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity, September 8, 2019

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

So Jesus is in the middle of a thunderstorm on the Sea of Galilee. Lightning is flashing. Waves are surging. The boat is filling. When the disciples wake up rather than to bale water along with the rest of them Jesus stands up and talks to the storm.

In that moment what went through the heads of the disciples? What would have gone through your head if you had been there? Who goes out onto their front porch when a tornado is coming and talks to the tornado, much less tells it what to do!

Jesus does. And it works. He told the sea to become calm and it did.

So Jesus is out in the wilderness with five thousand men plus women and children. It is getting late in the day. The people have nowhere to get any food. The disciples notice this. Jesus does not seem to notice this problem. He keeps teaching them. Finally, the disciples say something to Jesus about it and Jesus says to them, "You give them something to eat?"

Is Jesus not aware of the state of the treasury of His own ministry? Is Jesus not aware that even if the disciples have enough money in the treasury that they are so far away from town that there is nowhere to spend the money to get enough bread to feed these people? How can Jesus tell the disciples, "You give them something to eat"?

What would have gone through the disciples minds when Jesus said that to them? What would have gone through your mind if Jesus had told you feed over 10 000 people?

And yet before the day is done the disciples did give everyone something to eat. The disciples gave the people what Jesus gave the disciples to give to the people.

It sounded crazy when Jesus said it, but it worked.

So Jesus meets this deaf man. He takes the deaf man aside. He puts His fingers into the ears of the deaf man. He spits on the ground. What is going on! Then Jesus talks to the deaf man like the deaf man can hear Him. This is bizarre. Even for you and me who believe in Jesus this is strange. What is all of this about spitting on the ground and touching the man's tongue?

But it worked. The deaf man heard. He spoke fluently.

Later on Jesus meets a blind man. When Jesus meets the blind man Jesus spits on the man's eyes. I know that some of you may be familiar with the account in John's gospel, when Jesus spit on the ground and made mud and put it on the blind man's eyes. This is a different blind man that I am talking about. This blind man is in Mark's Gospel. Jesus spits directly on the blind man's eyes! And even at that when Jesus makes mud with His saliva for the blind man in John's gospel that is strange! What on earth is Jesus doing?

It looks pretty strange, but it worked! Both times it worked. The blind men received their sight.

Jairus' little girl died. She was twelve years old. She died while Jairus was off asking Jesus for help. By the time Jesus arrived at the home the little girl was dead. Jairus and his wife must have been devastated.

Already there were mourners present when Jesus arrived. Communities back then were close knit. Everyone knew everything. People had probably been in and out to check on the girl. When she died news traveled faster than Jesus did and there were a whole bunch of mourners there. Jesus told them not to weep. Jesus told them the girl was not dead. She was only sleeping. The mourners laughed at Jesus.

Did Jesus not understand the situation properly? Did Jesus not know what was at stake? When Jesus heard that she was dead why didn't Jesus just extend some sympathy to the parents for their loss? Why did He say this outrageous thing? What would have gone through the disciples' minds when Jesus said, "She is not dead. She is sleeping. Do not weep."? Would they have been embarrassed, confused? What would have gone through your head?

Then Jesus puts them all outside like they are the ones who are crazy. He only allowed Peter, James, John, and the girl's parents in the room with her corpse. He took her by the hand. That is strange. Even though I am a modern person and live in the New Testament and am not concerned with the rules of uncleanness, I still have never touched a corpse. I remember when Grandma Kanning died at the visitation Pastor Hofmann came to lead the devotion and while he was viewing Grandma, he reached out and touch her hand. I thought that was strange. And here Jesus has not yet fulfilled the law. The rules regarding uncleanness have not been fulfilled and He is touching a dead corpse. This will defile Him. He will have to undergo ritual cleansing in order to regain access to God at the temple. Jesus not only touches the girl. He takes her by the hand! Then He talks to her. He talks to her as if she can hear Him. He tells her to arise. He talks to her as if she can do what He is telling her to do! This is crazy! What would have gone through the disciples minds while they witnessed all of this? What would have gone through your mind if you had been there?

It sounded strange. It looked strange, but the dead girl sat up! She began to talk! She was alive again!

This is Jesus. This is your Lord.

Human beings have speculated what God would be like if He came to see us as a human. There was a TV show dedicated to this notion called, "Joan Ark." The TV show did not last long. Then there is Morgan Freeman and before him was George Burns each taking their turn to show us in comical fashion at least how God would look were He human.

We do not need such speculation. We know what God is like if He were human because He became human and we got to see what He was like.

This is what God is like: He is strange! He does things that we do not expect people to do. He associates with people with whom we do not expect Him to associate. He forgives people that we do not expect Him to forgive. He damns people that we do not expect Him to damn, mainly because we do not expect Him to damn at all, but damn He surely does.

He is the God who does things that are beyond our understanding, but at every moment with every strange event that He performs, bit by bit and little by little He is putting the creation back to rights.

The creation is broken. We broke it. We broke the fundamental existence of the creation. After all what is the fundamental truth of the creation? The fundamental truth of the creation is that God created it. That is the fundamental reality of existence. It is that fundamental reality that we broke.

We tried to be like God. We are trying to be like God. We will try to be like God. When we try to be like God we upset the balance of the universe and it breaks. We are like children who played with the delicate toy too hard and we broke it. And like so many broken toys, they still work, but they no longer work the way they are supposed to work. They no longer work the way we remember them working. It seems to me that we human beings have a racial memory. We have a memory that goes all the way back to the garden. After all why do you like to mow your grass or keep your flower beds or tend your garden? We make our homes into parks and that is what paradise is. Paradise is the Persian word for park. It is the word that the Bible uses. It is the word that God uses.

We all know that people should be able to see, but some don't. We all know that people should be able to hear, but some don't. We all know that hunger and homelessness should be eliminated. There should be no orphans or widows or widowers. We all know that there should be no extortion or robbery. We all know that there should be no adultery or falsehood. We all know that the creation would be a better place if all of these things were eliminated. We all know that the lame should walk. We all know that it is wrong that American soldiers have missing limbs because of military combat. We all know that war is wrong. Somewhere in our racial memory we have this memory of the way that things should be. It is the law that God wrote upon our hearts. It is the blueprint of His will that He will not let us forget.

But like so many children we do not read the instructions that came with our toy. We play with it too hard. We have violated its boundaries and now it is broken. We have committed adultery and we enjoy it. We have stolen from our neighbor and we enjoy what we have at his expense. We have lied about our neighbor and we like it. We crave more and more all of the time. We have taken the lives of others and we have justified it. We have defied our parents because we thought we knew better than they did just as we think we know better than God does. And now the creation is broken. We broke it. It doesn't work right and we do not have the power to fix it.

God's will even though we remember it no longer no makes sense to us. God's will looks strange to us.

It does not make sense to us that people should not fornicate and cohabit before marriage. It makes sense to us that they should try the sex out and try the living together out and see whether or not it will work before jumping into it for the rest of our lives. God's will forbidding these things does not make sense to us. And yet, even secular studies have shown that those who fornicate and those who cohabit put themselves at a greater risk of being used by the other person, at greater risk of being physically abused by the other person, and at a greater risk of divorce. God's will looks strange, but it works.

It does not make sense to us to curb our ambitions and be content with what God has given us. It makes sense to us that we should have more and more and desire more and more. It makes sense to us that if we do not desire more and more and try harder and harder to achieve more and more, that we will descend and be less and less. It does not make sense to simply be content, and yet even Money Magazine reports that there is a certain dollar figure that once you reach it you are the happiest you will ever be from the perspective of money and any more money beyond that will not make you any happier. Money Magazine knows. They did the study. God's will looks strange, but it works.

It does not make sense to us that people's individuality should be curbed. We think that everyone should have the right to be and choose who they want to be! If they want to change genders, that should be allowed because it makes sense to us that we can be whatever we want to be. But that is the original sin, the desire to be something other than what God created us to be. The desire to be God and to determine our own creation for ourselves. God's will does not make sense to us, but it works. You may consult with the thousands of people who resigned themselves to the will of God and were blessed by it.

It does not make sense to us to rest. We think that if we work harder and harder we will achieve more and more. Look what we could do if only we could do more! Look what we could achieve if only we did more! It does not make sense to us to rest. And I know that you live in the New Testament. I know that God has now allowed you to select on what day you will rest. But He has not released you from rest. And if you don't rest, you will get sick. Then you won't do anything for a while. Rest does not make sense to us, but it works.

It does not make sense to us to let this invisible God be God and let Him take care of the creation. We think that we need to do it. Surely we must manage everything and do everything or everything will fall apart. While God has placed us in charge of the creation to manage it as good stewards, He has not made us God. Only He is the one in whom all things trust. Only He is the One to whom all creatures look for their good and He gives them their food at the proper time.

It does not make sense, but that is only way the creation may work the way that it should. It is only if the Creator is the Creator and the creation is the creation. Anything else breaks it.

Jesus is the Creator. He is God. He is God who has come to us to restore the creation. And so what does He do? He does a lot of things that don't make sense to us, but the only reason they don't make sense to us is because we are sinners. We would break the creation by pushing it beyond its limits. He is the creator come to restore it.

He has come to give sight to the blind. He has come to make the lame walk. He has come to feed the hungry. He has come to make the deaf hear. He has come to forgive sinners. He has come to raise the dead.

And so it does not make sense when He says that He, the Christ, will be killed and on the third day rise again, but it happens! And it works! It looks strange when at His bidding we

are baptized or have our children baptized, but it works. It looks strange when we kneel at the altar to eat a little bit of bread and drink a sip of wine, but it works!

It all works, by the power of His resurrection.

It looks strange. It looks impossible, but it works.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.