

September 8, 2024
Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost

“My Human Hero”

Mark 7:31-37

Heroes always have flaws. That’s just how it is. In an election season all the candidates try to put themselves forward as moral, responsible visionaries who will always do what is right for whatever constituency they hope to represent. But the opposition always manages to find some blemish of the past with which to try and tarnish them. Sports heroes often seem perfect on the field, but if you dig into their personal lives, you’ll find some dirt. All of us have some secret we’d rather nobody ever know about.

Even the great heroes of the faith from Holy Scripture all have their warts. Abraham passing off his wife Sarah as his sister in Egypt, Moses being such a scaredy-cat when God calls him to lead His people out of Egypt. Jacob! The guy who receives the name Israel after which the whole of God’s nation will be named—what a shyster he was! Peter denied Jesus. St. Paul persecuted Jesus. Martin Luther—great theologian but some of the stuff he wrote seems downright antisemitic. Everybody has their flaws. Everybody falls short of righteousness.

*“He has done **all things** well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”* It’s kind of astonishing how correctly this crowd speaks of Jesus, especially because in Mark’s Gospel the crowd, while marveling at Jesus, aren’t quite what you would call believers in Jesus. Yet they don’t say, “Holy Cow! Look at the miracles He does.” They rightly say that Jesus does all things well, essentially saying that Jesus is righteous; does humanity right.

This is a very important aspect of our Lord on which to pause and focus today. Let’s face it, our attention is usually directed at the cross of Christ. Of course it is. It is there where Jesus most clearly is made our Savior, taking our place under God’s wrath, paying the blood price for all the world’s sin, clearing away that which stands between us and our Father who art in heaven. Or possibly our emphasis is on Christ’s victorious resurrection; the firstfruits of our own promised resurrection to eternal life on the Last Day. Also, we very often aim our thoughts toward Christ reigning over all things this very day in present time and on into that promised eternity. But we do not want to let all of this wonderful Jesus-truth to make us forget that He also lived a perfect human life in the flesh—doing all things well.

This truth should be a big, big comfort to us. Do you not have some sin that you are continually bringing before God in repentance? I’m talking about something you know is wrong, against God’s design, yet over and over it keeps ensnaring you? Something like the very common sin of pride, counting yourself worthy of some amount of esteem over those around you; maybe looking down on someone else—a very common sin; something like that.

So you catch yourself in that sin, whatever it is, and bring it before God in repentance, but even as you do so, maybe even praying to God that you’ll try to do better...you know you’re not going to do better. You have a sin like that? I bet you do. I’ve got like 68.

Very often our reaction to that guilt is to say to ourselves, yet again, “I’ve got to do better.” But you’re a sinner, and you know you’re going to fall into it again, because you know, you don’t do all things well. And if you stay there, it leaves you deflated, maybe even fearing and despairing because your life as a human being under God is wanting, lacking, not doing things well.

But if you look over at Jesus, at His life as a true human being—your brother in this flesh—you see that He does all things well; does it all perfectly. He is indeed righteous before

the Father fully in humanity. And you can know that His human righteousness exists for a very singular purpose—so that He could give it to you in exchange for your failures and sin!

His life, His perfect life, was about more than being the perfect sacrifice that He would be on Calvary. It's also simply about being a perfect human for you, so that His human perfect would be a gift to you by perfect grace! The healing that He was doing in smaller ways in giving back sight, opening deaf ears, and making the lame walk, He is doing in full upon all believers in living a perfect life in their stead before the Creator in heaven—living as designed; doing all things well with absolutely no fault to be found.

It's very important and comforting to remember this. In regard to sin, as I said, to see that you don't stand condemned, but also to inspire you to, being clothed in His human righteousness, to once again take up that armor of God and stand firm, resisting Satan and sin all the more.

But this also comforts us as we struggle in the faith. Let's face it, our continued failures to temptation can make us question the strength of our faith sometimes. The cares and challenges of life can fill our minds and schedules, seemingly prompting us to kind of drop that faith and leave it behind like forgotten house keys. At the Spirit's prompting we return to ourselves and repent, but we can feel like our faith is flimsy and weak.

"He has done all things well," in our stead, including faith. Scripture is quite clear: Christ incarnate has a human body and soul just like us, and His human faith in His Creator was perfect...again, in our place. He believed God 100 percent. He trusted God 100%. He was faithful to God 100%. And yes, He is also in fact God, 100%! But by the grace of God He humbled Himself into human obedience to God as a human being, 100%.

The author of Hebrews writes after that great chapter about all the heroes of the faith: *"let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the **founder and perfecter of our faith**, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."*

"The perfecter of our faith!" We can look to Jesus' perfect human life and know that despite ourselves, His perfect obedience and His perfect faith is the very gift of grace we receive by virtue of our Holy Baptism into Christ. He has done ALL things well, for us, in our stead.

So, then next time you mess up in sin and feel like a loser, the next time Satan is shouting in your ear the lie that your faith just isn't cutting it, take a deep breath, think of Christ's human life and remember: He does all things well...for me. Sure, let it inspire you to again try to do things better for Him here in this life; that's right repentance. But more so let it assure you that You this day have a human hero, and He is flawless always. Christ has done all necessary to restore you to the Father, clothed in the perfect human life that He lived and gives, to you.

Amen.