May the God of hope fill you with complete joy and peace as you continue to believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

My Fellow Redeemed,

They got all dressed up, her new gown, his best suit. He had made the reservations months ago. This was the nicest restaurant in town, one of the nicest in the state. They held hands across the candlelit table and waited for their waiter. “Prime rib, who wants prime rib. Get your prime rib here. Only 25 dollars. Prime rib.” Another server walks buy, “Red wine, I’ve got your red wine. Pick your vintage. Red wine.” They looked at each other, this isn’t what they expected.

Before we step a foot in certain places, we have expectations. Some places we expect great service and a classy atmosphere, others we expect to try our patience. Yet sometimes one can’t live up to that expectation while another far surpasses it. The same can be true of people. Certain people we expect to act and react in certain ways. Certain positions and titles come with their own expectations, but we also know people are unpredictable. We can’t really know what to expect from anyone, we are all full of surprises.

In our lesson today, it seems at first like Jesus does something truly surprising, Christian’s are used to reading about him healing the sick and disabled, but not like this, not with this kind of demonstration. Yet these actions reveal something wonderful about Jesus’s heart and his care. He teaches us what we can expect when we have our own troubles. He teaches us what to expect when we lead others to him. This is what we can expect from Jesus. He gives personal care. He does all things well.

Jesus and his disciples were traveling on the outskirts of Judea, along the far northern border until they reach the far side of the sea of Galilee, an area of mixed population of Jews and Gentiles. The last time Jesus was there, he freed a man from a legion of demons and in fear, the people asked him to leave. Now upon his return, they had a different reaction.

Some brought him a pitiful man. He is deaf. Imagine how the world would have just passed this man by, he saw things happening, but often didn’t know what they meant. In a crowd, he never heard an excuse me, never knew when someone might be approaching, but crowds were a jumbled chaos. Like many who cannot hear, he couldn’t speak. It seems likely he could make noise, but nothing anyone could understand. They didn’t have standardized sign language. He probably couldn’t read or write. He was cut off. Even with others, he was alone.

But his friends had heard about Jesus. Perhaps the demon possess man had shared his mercy and power. Perhaps they had seen him elsewhere in Judea. Perhaps they were just following the crowd. They hoped he was as merciful as they had heard. They hoped he would do something for their friend. They hoped he really had the power people attributed to him. The believed he could help, but they really didn’t know what to expect.

All the gospels, especially Mark, highlight those times when Jesus does something different, unexpected; he certainly does here. First, **he took the man aside in private, away from the crowd.** This moment was just for him. He was not only going to have all of Jesus attention, but Jesus wanted all of his. He wanted to calm his anxiety. He wanted be able to teach and encourage as well as heal. **He put his fingers in the man’s ears.** This was the root of his problem. His actions imply a promise. **Then he spit**, moving the focus to the mouth, **and he touched the man’s tongue.** Again this implies a promise. **After he looked up to heaven,** this is where Jesus came from, this is where help comes from, **he sighed**, visibly, audibly, the one who has born all our infirmities is distraught at the pain a sinful world brings. Finally he speaks one word, **Ephphatha!** Be opened. Jesus spoke and creation obeyed, **immediately the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was set free, and he began to speak plainly.**

She sat between a coughing kid and a pale sickly man until the nurse called her name. Then she sat in a chilly examination room and watched the minutes roll by. The nurse took her vitals. Finally, the doctor rolled in, looked at her chart, asked some questions, gave her his diagnosis, wrote a prescription, and rushed on to the next patient. He did his best, his treatment was probably right, but she wanted a little more care from her doctor rather clearing a chart? Doctors have many patients and they do their best to help them all, but they just don’t have the time.

When we consider that the Lord is the God of the universe, that his eyes see all creatures, billions of souls depend on him, and all Christians call to him for help, how can he possibly have time for me, for you, for us? With so many needs, how can he meet yours? With so many concerns, how can he answer you? Sometimes people will wonder about this, even Christians, well God doesn’t care about this or that, he has better things to do. We decide we have to work through things on our own, I don’t want to bother the Lord. When we need council, when we need care, we don’t think to open the Word because we imagine that it will be no help for me today, in this situation, with our modern problems. I mean what can we really expect from God from heaven? What can I expect out of all the people in the world, and everything in the universe? What can we expect from God’s word now?

Jesus shows us what to expect from him right here. Certainly, he could have just placed his hands on the man, or just said, be opened, but he took him aside and spent time with him. The crowds were all around but Jesus made the time for him. This is who Jesus is. This is what Jesus does. This is what you can expect from the Lord. He cares for you. He takes all the time it takes. He gives all the care you need. His ears are open to your needs. His heart goes out to your pain. His word not only opens closed ears but breaks open hard hearts. He doesn’t uses saliva, but from his mouth he gives a word of promise along with the waters of baptism, and those waters have washed your sins away. He doesn’t reach out with his fingers to communicate his love and power with his touch, but his true body and blood are given to you, for you to eat, for you to drink, for you to know that he has given himself for you. And that body and blood have the power to forgive sins, and to strengthen you body and soul for eternal life. Ears opened, mouth loosed, life restored, he continues to speak. He speaks to you comfort. He speaks to you encouragement. He speaks to you guidance. All this, Jesus does for each of you. That is the depth of his love. That is the reach of his power. That is the standard of his care. This is what you can expect from Jesus, his personal care for you, for your body, for your soul, for your life.

Jesus has his own timing in mind. His ultimate goal was his death for the sins of the world, so as he often did, **Jesus gave the people strict order to tell no one.** Enough had seen. He had acted out of love and compassion, not attention or a greater following, but how could they keep quiet? **The more he did so, the more they kept proclaiming it.** I can’t blame them, **they were amazed beyond all measure.** Soon more than 4000 would gather to see and hear from this Jesus. They too learned, **he has done everything well,** he even does the impossible, **He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.**

Sometimes we have a friend we have a hard time explaining to people who don’t know him. You know all the times he was there for you. You know how faithful a friend he can be, but you also know sometimes he says things that make everyone uncomfortable. Sometimes he doesn’t act the way people expect in social situations, so you preface the introduction, “We’ve been through a lot together.” The world has certain standards about what is proper for polite conversation. In polite society you don’t politics and religion. I mean what if Jesus says something about sin? What if he brings up death? What if he makes it seem like we need him to get through the day, that we aren’t in control of our so called destiny? Can we really tell others about Jesus? Or do we have to explain why we are here, why we come to a place like this by saying, well, I’ve known Jesus a long time…he’s helped me through a lot. Do we know what to expect with Jesus? My friends, you know what to expect, the same thing those who witnessed this miracle said, **he has done all things well.**

Now I won’t say that I do all things well. Nor that we as a congregation do all things well. Though we certainly try. I try to preach well. We try to sing well. We try to be welcoming and kind and generous. But sometimes we may fail at this. Sometimes a sermon might not be exciting and inspiring, or even interesting. Sometimes the hymns aren’t our favorites, and we are all just tired and struggle to sing. We aren’t always in a kind mood, and sometimes we feel like we only have so much to give. But our goal as a church, as a pastor, as Christians is not to introduce people to our congregation or to our pastor or to invited them to our service, but to tell them about Jesus, with him we know what to expect, **he does all things well.**

And even in spite of a pastor or a hymn or even ourselves, Jesus does all things well. And he is here to meet with us, to visit all who walk through those doors. He does things well, to show his love and compassion in ways that we cannot in ways that we do not. He does well to forgive all our sins, to invite you to come into the presence of God, to extend and proclaim God’s great mercy to you. He does all things well to listen to our prayers and to intercede with the Father on our behalf. He does all things well to teach us. His word never fails it never returns to him empty, but it always reveals our sins, it always leads us to him in whom we can trust. He does all things well as by his word of promise, these waters have cleansed you from all sin. He does all things well as he feeds us with his holy sacrament. He does all things well as he sends his Holy Spirit to strengthen us wherever we go. And finally, my friends he does all things well as he gathers his own, his sheep into the eternal bliss he has prepared for you. That’s what everyone can expect from Jesus. It’s nice to know what to expect. Amen.