

# THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 5th, 2021



## CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue  
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1  
Church: 905-685-8294 Fax 905-685-7661  
[www.christlutheransc.ca](http://www.christlutheransc.ca)

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon  
**Bulletin Announcements:** Please send to [secretary@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:secretary@christlutheransc.ca).  
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

**Pastor:** Pastor Todd Hoefts (289-362-0113) [pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com](mailto:pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com)  
**Parish Assistant:** Louise Gondosch (905-329-8579) [parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca)  
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**Prayer:** Lord of all power and might, Author and Giver of all good things, graft in our hearts the love of Your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord who lives and reigns with You, and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Musician:** Mayumi Munoz  
**Reader:** Howard Bogusat

**Sunday School:** “God cares about our Grief and Loss” <https://youtu.be/7femKYurDxl>  
**Children’s Message:** “Armour of God” <https://youtu.be/78dhHuABExc>  
**Summer Session:** “God Cares when my feelings get hurt” <https://youtu.be/JRjJST3GGSI>

**DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:**

Monday: Mark 1: 40-45                      Wed.: 11 Cor. 9: 10-15                      Friday: Phil. 1: 12-18  
Tuesday: 1 Tim. 1: 12-17                      Thurs: 1 Thess. 1: 2-10                      Saturday: Phil. 1: 19-26

**WORSHIP NOTE:**

In compliance with Ontario Provincial Step 3, we can now offer in-person worship with allowances for social distancing.

- **Sunday Service will be live-streamed at 10 AM on Facebook:** (<https://www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC>).
- Following the service, a recording will be uploaded to YouTube – “Gathering the Scattered” at: (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3a4p6prdJGEyP5S-q-cNSq>).
- A PDF version of the order of service for each Sunday will also be posted on our church website: [christlutheransc.ca](http://christlutheransc.ca).
- Archived videos of Sunday’s service will be uploaded to [christlutheransc.ca](http://christlutheransc.ca) – “Worship” page.

Any questions or concerns, please check out our church website (<http://christlutheransc.ca/>), contact Judy Slingerland ([chairman.worship@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:chairman.worship@christlutheransc.ca)) or Pastor Todd ([pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com](mailto:pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com)) or phone the church office. May the peace of the risen Lord be with you all.

**FLOWERS** have been placed on the altar this morning to the glory of God by Glenn and Catherine Holder on the occasion of their Wedding Anniversary.

**VOTER’S MEETING:** **Sunday, September 19th, 2:00 pm** – Voters Meeting (tentative based on public health restrictions). Election of Church Council and ratification of Council decisions made under COVID-19 restrictions.

**MOVING FORWARD** - As we continue in Stage 3 of COVID 19 restrictions and the community is continuing to be vaccinated, we are still left with the Delta variant actively circulating in our community and elsewhere. We would like to ensure that the membership is comfortable with and still wish to move towards having two (2) services each Sunday with the eventuality of resuming activities and programs between services. Should you have a preference one way or the other, please share your views and preferences with either Pastor or a member of council. The first week for two services is presently scheduled for **Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021**. If necessary, this matter will be placed on the agenda for discussion at the Voter’s meeting.



**WE'RE EXCITED!!!!** SUNDAY SCHOOL will be starting up again this Fall. Our plan is to meet for 2 (two) weeks each month. Stay tuned for more details.

**LWML-C/Mary Martha:** It's that time of year again! We are so excited to invite you to join us at our LWML-C/Mary Martha meetings which will be held **in person!** **We will be still wearing masks and social distancing at our meetings.** (You are welcome to bring your own beverage.)

Sept. 21<sup>st</sup> – 7 p.m. Meet Eduardo, our adopted Seminary Student and musician and his wife!

Oct. 19<sup>th</sup> – 7 p.m. LWML National Convention Highlights

Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> – 7 p.m. Pack socks for Warm Feet for the Street.

Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> – 5:30 p.m. Advent Tea

We are delighted to host the LWML Sunday & Fall Rally Worship Service at Christ Lutheran Church on Sunday, October 3rd at 3 p.m.

**THE OBITUARY** for our dear Erna McBride can now be read on the website of George Darte Funeral Home. Although because of Covid restrictions it will be a private funeral, friends are still invited to attend and offer their sympathy at the Funeral Home visitations, which will be held at George Darte, 585 Carlton St. on Thursday afternoon September 9th from 2 - 3:30 p.m. and that same evening from 7 - 8:30 p.m. Covid protocol will be followed and guests are requested to wear a mask. Donations may be made in Erna's memory to the Haiti Children's Feeding programme which was so dear to her heart (having originally been started by her daughter Erin and heavily supported and carried on by Erna especially through her many fundraisers (*please make donations or cheques to Christ Lutheran Church and Karen will forward it on to the Haiti Children's Feeding Programme*); or to Hospice Niagara where Erna spent her final days.

**Last Sunday Attendance: Aug. 29th, 2021 Attn: 10 a.m. – 63**

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Weekly Need</u>	<u>Last Sunday</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>	<u>+ or - (-)</u>
Current:	271,175.00	5,214.90	2,627.00	123,588.61	(48,503.22)
Missions	20,000.00	384.62	282.00	11,138.00	(1,554.31)
Property Improvement:			31.00	3,712.00	

**FLOWERS FOR ALTAR:** If you would like to place flowers on the altar, please sign your name at the back of the church or email: [secretary@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:secretary@christlutheransc.ca). Cost is \$25/bouquet

**THE CANADIAN LUTHERAN:** The Canadian Lutheran is available to read online at: [WWW.CANADIANLUTHERAN.CA](http://WWW.CANADIANLUTHERAN.CA)

**SUPPORTING YOUR CHURCH DURING THE PANDEMIC:** It's important for members to keep in mind that expenses for payroll, utilities, maintenance, etc. continue to accumulate even when you are not comfortable attending service.

**1. THROUGH EFT DONATIONS:** Lutheran Church - Canada, East District Corporation continues to facilitate this service for us. To assist you in continuing your financial support to your church, we encourage you to fill out the form that is available for printing at:

[http://christlutheransc.ca/?page\\_id=96](http://christlutheransc.ca/?page_id=96) and then mail the form along with a voided cheque to:

Lutheran Church-Canada, East District Corporation

275 Lawrence Ave., Kitchener, ON N2M 1Y3

Attn: Darryll Holland

**2. BY MAIL:** cheques can still be mailed to:

Christ Lutheran Church

140 Russell Ave. St. Catharines, ON L2R 1W1

or dropped in the Church mailbox at the East entrance.

**3. ONLINE VIA LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA:** Lutheran Church-Canada has opened a web portal that allows parishioners to donate directly to their home church:

<https://lutheranchurch-canada.tng-secure.com/?pageId=donation-edit&categoryId=10972>

select "St. Catharines-Christ Lutheran-30950" from the drop down menu, enter the amount of your donations and LCC will transfer your donation to Christ. Donation is via VISA or Mastercard. Tax receipts will be issued by LCC (not Christ).

This opportunity will be in effect until the COVID-19 emergency is over.

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH  
REFORMATION 500<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
SOUTH AMERICAN SETTING

OPENING HYMN: "O Worship The King"

LSB Tune # 560

1 Oh, wor - ship the King, all - glo - rious a - bove.  
2 Oh, tell of his might; oh, sing of his grace,  
Oh, grate - ful - ly sing his pow'r and his love;  
Whose robe is the light, whose can - o - py space;  
Our shield and de - fend - er, the An - cient of Days,  
His char - iots of wrath the deep thun - der - clouds form,  
Pa - vil - ioned in splen - dor, and gird - ed with praise.  
And dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

6 O measureless Might, ineffable love,  
While angels delight to hymn you above,  
The humbler creation, though feeble their lays,  
With true adoration shall sing to your praise.

Text: Robert Grant, 1779-1838, alt.  
Tune: William Croft, 1678-1727

HANOVER  
10 10 11 11

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

O God our Father, since You have set forth the way of life for us in Your beloved Son, we confess our slowness to learn of Him, our failure to follow Him, our reluctance to bear the cross:

**Have mercy on us and forgive us, O Lord.**

Forgive our poverty of worship, our neglect of fellowship and the Sacraments of grace, our hesitating witness for Christ, our evasion of responsibility in Your service, our imperfect stewardship of Your gifts:

**Have mercy on us and forgive us, O Lord.**

Forgive us that so little of Your love has reached others through us, that we have been thoughtless in our judgements, hasty in condemnation, grudging in reconciling, unwilling to help all in need:

**Have mercy on us and forgive us, O Lord.**

Have mercy on us, O God:

**According to Your never-ending love, blot out our sins, wash us through and through from sinful stains, creating clean hearts in us, with new and right spirits. Amen.**

With mercy and compassion, our Father in Heaven saves you. The Light of the promised Holy Spirit guides your feet into the way of peace. And so in the place of Jesus Christ and by His Holy Command, I forgive you all of your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

### SUNG KYRIE



Have mer - cy, O Lord, have mer-cy and hear us; Have  
Mer - cy O Christ, have mer-cy and hear us; Have  
Mer - cy O Lord, have mer - cy and hear us; Please  
give us Your peace; please give us Your peace.

### HYMN OF PRAISE: "Glory Be To God On High"

*Spanish Chant MADRID*



1 Glo-ry be to God on high, this is now our joy-ful cry!  
2 Jes-us Christ, the Ho - ly One, Fath - er's on - ly Son, Who came  
Peace to all who live on earth, and Your grace for our new birth!  
down to earth from realms on high, born as man for us to die.  
Praise and wor-ship, glor-if - y, hon - or You our Lord most high.  
Lamb of God, to You, we pray, take all of our sins a-way,  
Grac-ious Fa-ther, Heav'nly King, un-to You a-lone we sing.  
Spir-it, Fath-er, God a-bove, praise we now Your glo-rious love

## GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY:

The Lord be with you

**And also with you.**

We pray: Generous Father, like a loving parent You always welcome us when we come to You in faith. Encourage us by Your Word and Spirit to keep on prayerfully approaching You for whatever we need, trusting that You supply what is best for us. We pray through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## THE WORD

**The Old Testament:** *Isaiah 35: 4-7*

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**The Epistle:** *James 2: 1-17*

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, 'Have a seat here, please', while to the one who is poor you say, 'Stand there', or, 'Sit at my feet', have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you? You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For the one who said, 'You shall not commit adultery', also said, 'You shall not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgement will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgement. What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

SUNG GOSPEL VERSE:



Sing Al -- le -- lu -- ia! To Whom shall we go, Lord? Sing  
Al -- le -- lu -- ia! Your Words bring new life, Lord! Sing  
Al -- le -- lu -- ia! We've come to be - lieve You -- as  
Ho -- ly of God - Sing Al -- le -- lu -- ia!

**The Holy Gospel:** St. Mark 7: 24-37

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Mark, the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter:

**Glory to You, O Lord.**

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ.**

HYMN OF THE DAY:

*"Singing All Praises"*

Verse 1:

Blind man's eyes are opened  
Now he can see again  
Singing all praises to the Lord  
Praise God for all His mercy  
Praise Him and give Him glory  
Singing all praises to the Lord  
He was blind now he sees  
Praise God's Name forever



**Chorus:**

**Praise Him give Him all praise  
Sing it aloud to the Lord  
Praise Him give Him all praise  
Sing it aloud to the Lord**

**Verse 2:**

**Deaf man's ears are opened  
Now he can hear again  
Singing all praises to the Lord  
Praise God for all His goodness  
Praise Him for all His kindness  
Singing all praises to the Lord  
He was deaf now he hears  
Praise God's Name forever**

**Chorus:**

**Praise Him give Him all praise  
Sing it aloud to the Lord  
Praise Him give Him all praise  
Sing it aloud to the Lord**

**Verse 3:**

**Praise Him with sounding trumpets  
Praise Him with cheerful voices  
Singing all praises to the Lord  
Praise Him the grave is empty  
Praise Him for He has risen  
Singing all praises to the Lord  
He was dead now He lives  
We will live forever**

**Chorus:**

**Praise Him give Him all praise  
Sing it aloud to the Lord  
Praise Him give Him all praise  
Sing it aloud to the Lord**

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**MESSAGE**

**PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

Tender loving Father: thank you for making us your dearly loved children through holy baptism. Remember all your sons and daughters throughout the world. Stir up in us a hunger for your word that we may rejoice in both your law and your gospel, use them properly, and bring them to a confused and condemned world. Then open ears that are deaf to the gospel, and bring joyful thanks and praise to lips that are mute to your name. *Hear us, O God: **Your mercy is Great!***

Compassionate and gentle Father, remember those who are not good enough in the eyes of the world. Soften our hearts to show the same compassion to others that you have shown to us. Bless the church's ministry among those who are deaf or otherwise disadvantaged, that they too may hear the gospel and live.

*Hear us, O God: **Your mercy is Great!***



Powerful and transforming Father, remember us in this congregation. Let your word have free course among us. Bind us together in genuine Christian love. Grant us grace to put to death all resentment, jealousy, and pride, and raise us to the joy of serving one another in gentle humility, free from partiality so that our faith may be proved true by works of love. *Hear us, O God:* **Your mercy is Great!**

Just and righteous Father, remember the leaders of our nation. Give them wisdom and courage for their duty, and bring our people to honour and respect them. Keep our society free from improper discrimination. Protect the poor and downtrodden and provide for those who are unable to earn sufficient income for themselves. *Hear us, O God:* **Your mercy is Great!**

Healing and comforting Father, remember all who are in need. Meet the needs of every hurting soul, including those we know personally to be in want or need, especially we remember: (names are read); *Hear us, O God:* **Your mercy is Great!**

Merciful Father, you have called us to live together in harmony. Help us and hear our prayers according to your love and mercy. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Lord, remember us in Your Kingdom, and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

#### BLESSING:

Go out into the world in peace; take good courage, hold fast to what is good; strengthen the weak, honour all, love and serve the Lord, rejoicing always. And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favour, + and give you peace.  
**Amen.**

#### CLOSING HYMN:

##### ***"My Faith Looks Up To Thee"***

**My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary,  
Saviour divine!  
Now hear me while I pray, take all my guilt away,  
O let me from this day,  
be wholly Thine!**

**May Thy rich grace impart strength to my fainting heart,  
my zeal inspire!  
As Thou hast died for me, O may my love to Thee  
pure, warm, and changeless be,  
a living fire!**

**While life's dark maze I tread, and griefs around me spread,  
be Thou my guide;  
bid darkness turn to day, wipe sorrow's tears away,  
nor let me ever stray  
from Thee aside.**

**When ends life's transient dream, when death's cold, sullen stream  
shall o'er me roll;  
blest Saviour, then in love, fear and distrust remove;  
O bear me safe above,  
a ransomed soul!**

**REV. TODD HOEFS**

**PENTECOST 15 (series B)**

**Scripture: St. Mark 7:24-37**

**September 5, 2021**

You know what it's like when you've got big news but can't share it?!

It bubbles up inside. You can't hold it in for very long. Like getting a new job or a new car or when someone's getting married or pregnant with their 1<sup>st</sup> child?! It's good news, exciting news.

When you've found that one perfect gift you just can't wait till it's their birthday to show them. It's THAT good. Good news is tough to keep under wraps. Jesus has that kind of effect on people He encounters. No one can keep quiet in His presence, as much as He orders silence. He's travelling in the region of Tyre. A region over 100 kilometers away from busy Jerusalem. On the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Tyre comes from the ancient Semitic word meaning Rock. A city on a rock island. Jesus, often called the Rock of our faith, goes to a Rock city, a commercial city, a Gentile city, to escape. Mark says "He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice..." I'm already becoming known around this community and now – in a nearby bakery, when I don't wear my clergy collar, they say: Oh, you're incognito today! Keeping a low profile are we? I guess these collars are kinda memorable?!! Why Jesus wants to be left alone we do not know. We can imagine He's pulled in many different directions to create more miracles or bread & fish lunches. Perhaps He wants rest. Thinking He's in Gentile country, a Rabbi from Israel shouldn't glean too much attention.... But a woman hears about Him. News sure travels as fast in ancient times as our internet access. No introduction. No hello. No welcome. The woman simply bows down and worships Jesus. A SYRO PHOENECIAN woman. A woman of Syrian, Greek and Canaanite origin. A non-Jewish person who's worshipping a Rabbi she's heard about to cure her daughter of a demon. Wow. This is big! Most folks believed all sorts of superstitions about demons then...as many do still. Few if any would've taken her concerns seriously. Maybe a religious leader would perform some form of ritual for her, to no avail. SHE KNOWS JESUS CAN DO SOMETHING! She's heard of Him. She's got nothing left to lose. A woman pleading to get help for her daughter, who, as a girl, had less value than a boy-child. She's putting all she has, all her years of worshipping some other god at Jesus' feet like stacking all your cash on a winning number!

She's got nothing to lose & all to gain.... For her desperate worship Jesus almost dismissively forces her to go. "Let the children eat first...", meaning, the Jews of Israel. God set His seal on Israel and promised salvation through their lineage. Set them apart as His own. How can God throw the Bread of life meant for Israel to the dogs, meaning, this Gentile woman?! Remember, dogs here aren't the lovely pets we enjoy today. Dogs in ancient days ran loose scavenging, begging and stealing any piece of food they could find. They were treated as unwanted pests. So, what's happening here? Is Jesus insulting her? Is He unaware of His Father's plan to save the WHOLE WORLD?!

Should Jesus be so concerned with Israel after we've heard for over a month the John 6 Gospel on how they rejected Him as the Bread of Life? It's none of those. Jews of the day called these residents of Tyre "dogs" (and much worse). Jesus is using a stereotype nasty slang label as a way to teach ALL OF US that He's here to save all people. Jesus doesn't insult, He is without sin.

Jesus isn't unaware of His Father's plan as HE is the Saviour. He knows His work.

He knows what lies ahead. He IS concerned that His people (Israel) come to true faith and through them ALL PEOPLE WILL BE SAVED! Like this woman. And Jesus compliments her faith, for in desperation, she reminds Him and us: even the dogs get the crumbs that fall from the master's table. Like when we give our dog a bite of peanut butter on toast as she's sitting by our feet. This woman is worshipping at the feet of the Bread of Life and would settle for crumbs – cuz crumbs falling from God's Table is a feast. The True Bread come down from Heaven feeds with lasting food. His own self. This woman knows and believes! For wanting crumbs, she gets a full meal.

New life. The demons depart from her daughter at that moment! She goes home, and life is restored. From isolation to full restoration to her community again! Another isolated person is helped by Jesus, we mustn't forget. A deaf mute. He can't hear and can't speak. Near the Sea of Galilee. So Jesus is

moving back out of Gentile land closer to Jerusalem. Again, not wanting to be in the public eye, Jesus heals the man privately. Touching and spitting, Jesus is REFORMING & RESHAPING His creation, bringing hearing and speech back to this man. God's Kingdom of help has arrived! 'Ephphatha' BE OPENED! All is made new! And notice – there's a connection between the desperate Syrophenician woman and this deaf mute man's situation – Jesus COMMAND to say nothing to anyone about it! And the more He says don't the more zealously they proclaim it!

They both have a new found passion. The Greek word here for proclaim is the same used of John the Baptizer's sermons! [Like the Great Karoosos] They're preaching Jesus Christ and what He's done for them! Even quoting a part of the Old Testament: *"He's done everything well - makes the deaf hear and mute speak."*

Two isolated people needing help not only running over at the mouth but preaching the Good News! That's how much impact an encounter with the living Christ has! The Gospel inspires sharing.

And, this good news isn't just located in Tyre and the Decapolis, but the power and possibility of God's Kingdom of love, healing and grace expands to all nations, all times, all places.

What seems impossible is a reality. What sin and rebellion have run down Jesus restores, lifts up and gives new voice. But sadly, we tend to ignore God's Kingdom when it comes to us.

We ignore the fact that Jesus first shows up in the wilderness. We forget that both the heavens and the temple curtain were torn apart. We too act as if we don't believe that the cross and tomb ARE actually empty. We selfishly beat ourselves up for our disbelief because we expect Jesus to come dynamically, swoop in and rescue on our time-table; we often feel guilty for the ONE TIME WE ACTUALLY did listen to Jesus and TOLD NOONE ANYTHING ABOUT THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD IN OUR LIVES.... because we forget that His goodness is there in good times and bad.

That's why we need God's word of Law, reminding us of what we've done wrong, that we are at rock bottom. That we are as desperate as that poor woman when we're begging for an end to the stress, a relief from the frustration, just to catch a break. And at rock bottom is where we need to be.

For then we realize we can't save ourselves. Trust in His cure. Eat up the crumbs from the Bread of Life. Bank everything of Jesus. He's already solved your sinful problem. He opened up God's Kingdom of Heaven to all people when He spread out His arms and died on the cross.

He has made a way for you to access God's mercy all the time. Whenever you're in need.

The cross shows us the great lengths our God is willing to go to save us. That's the reason why Jesus didn't want those 2 people telling anyone. He hadn't gone to the cross yet. He didn't say "it is finished" yet. The cross signals the end of all the sins and disease and death. The cross is where the price of these miracles and healings is paid out. Jesus goes along touching the untouchable, sticking fingers in ears, grabbing hold of tongues, reaching out to lepers, taking the dead by the hand to absorb into His flesh what has gone wrong with our flesh. He becomes the disease for your healing. He becomes deaf in death for your hearing. He becomes mute for your praise.

He becomes Sin for your holiness. He goes to the darkness so that you might walk in Light.

He plunges into your desperation to brings you up to joy, hope and peace.

He doesn't tell us to be quiet. He's given His Holy Spirit to His church so we'll be His hands and feet and mouth and presence in the world. This began the day of your baptism, the day you got set apart for God's purposes. Through you, in your experiences, people will be drawn to an encounter with the living God. Jesus' gifts of grace and life inspire new passion into your witness to the grandness of God's vision, the immensity of His mission, that the church is here for all.

Jesus has done all things well. He makes right every person before God.

He baptizes, feeds, and forgives you. He opens your ears to His Word.

He loosens your tongues to sing His new song of salvation.

He is welcomed in your heart as the crumbs of Holy Communion enter your mouth.

He has done all things well. And you, restored believers, are the living proof of it.

As your overflowing good news overflows!

Amen.