

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

(Mark 7: 31-37)

(*Poem* Vol. 3, pp. 358-9; *Gospel* Vol. 5, pp. 306-8)

(After an altercation in a village where they had been attacked, Jesus and His apostles are staying in the house of a woman who is unaware of Who He is. The woman is saying:)

'Here in the village, we all want to go to Judaea at Passover, to see if we can find this Jesus. Because we have some sick people. His disciples cured some of them, but not everyone. Among the latter there is the young son of a brother of my brother-in-law's wife.'

'What is the matter with him?' asks Jesus smiling.

'He is... He does not speak and he does not hear. Perhaps a demon entered the womb of his mother, to make her suffer and drive her to despair. But he is good, not like a possessed person. The disciples said that Jesus of Nazareth is needed for him, because there must be something missing, that only Jesus can cure... Oh! here are my sons and my husband! Melkiah, I have welcomed these pilgrims in the name of the Lord, and I was telling them about Levi... Sarah, go and milk the sheep. And you, Samuel, go down into the grotto and bring some oil and wine, and get some apples from the attic. Hurry up, Sarah, we will prepare the beds upstairs.'

And Jesus says: 'Do not tire yourself, woman. Any place will suit us. Could I see the man of whom you were speaking?'

'Yes... But... Oh! Lord! Are You perhaps the Nazarene?'

'I am.'

The woman drops on her knees, shouting: 'Melkiah, Sarah, Samuel! Come and worship the Messiah! What a day! And I have Him in my house! And I have been speaking to Him! And I brought Him water to cleanse His wound... Oh!...' she is choking with emotion. She then runs to the basin and sees that it is empty: 'Why have you thrown that water out? It was holy water! Oh! Melkiah! The Messiah is here with us.'

'Yes' says Jesus, smiling. 'But be good, woman, and don't tell anybody. Go and get the deaf-mute, and bring him here...'

Melkiah is soon back - with the deaf-mute, his relatives, and at least half of the people in the village... The mother of the poor fellow worships Jesus, and implores Him.

'Yes, it will be done as you wish' says Jesus. He takes the deaf-mute by the hand, and draws him away from the crowd, who are pressing together, and whom the apostles are busy pushing back, to protect Jesus' wounded hand. Jesus draws the deaf-mute close to Himself, puts His forefingers into his ears, touches his lips with His tongue, then raising His eyes to the sky, which is growing dark, He breathes on the face of the man, and shouts in a loud voice: 'Be opened!' and then lets him go.

The young deaf-mute looks at Him for a moment, while the crowds whisper. The change in his countenance is surprising: from listless and sad, it becomes amazed and smiling. He touches his ears with his hands, presses them, takes his hands away... He persuades himself that he can really hear, and he opens his mouth saying: 'Mother! I can hear! Oh! Lord, I adore You!'

The crowd is seized by the usual enthusiasm, and they ask one another: 'How can he be able to speak, if he never heard a word since he was born? A miracle in a miracle! He loosened his tongue and opened his ears, and at the same time He taught him to speak. Long live Jesus of Nazareth! Hosanna to the Holy Messiah!'

And they press against Jesus, Who raises His wounded hand to bless them, while some, urged by the woman of the house, wet their faces and limbs with the remaining drops of water left in the basin.

Jesus sees them and shouts: 'Because of your faith, you are all cured. Go home. Be good and honest. Believe in the word of the Gospel. And keep to yourselves what you know, until it is

time to announce it in the squares and throughout the whole world. May My peace be with you.'