

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Mark 7:31-37
August 19th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Be Opened

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Into the paradise of our Lord's creation Satan came down in the bodily form of a serpent to destroy that paradise, deceiving Eve, who taking of the forbidden fruit offered some to her husband Adam who was with her. Adam, instead of rebuking her, and teaching her to obey God's command, instead freely partook of the fruit, and from that moment on Adam, and all his offspring, have turned a deaf ear to our Lord and His commandments, and have been unable to perfectly tell of God's truth and deeds.

Therefore, into this fallen world, our Lord + Jesus Christ came down from Heaven and took on the human flesh of His creation Adam, in order that He might do what Adam, and all His offspring, including us, were unable to do—face the temptation of the devil, resist him, and fulfill the Law of God. Our Lord, having fulfilled the Law perfectly, suffered and died the punishment of Adam and all his offspring on the cross, in order that He might restore to this world ears that can hear His Holy Word, and tongues that can speak His truth and sing His praise.

In the Gospel for today we have a shining example of our Lord's doing just that, opening ears and loosing tongues. On the surface, this seems like a simple text—our Lord + Jesus Christ heals a man of his deafness and his inability to speak. But if we peel back the layers of the onion, which is this text, we see our Lord is showing us how all the world is to be healed of their deaf ears and mute tongues.

The Evangelist St. Mark tells us that our Lord was traveling through the midst of the region of the Decapolis, that is, the ten cities, toward the Sea of Galilee. This region is the extreme Northeast of the Kingdom of Israel. Our Lord began His ministry in the Northern Kingdom; the kingdom which deserted our Lord and His commands first. For shortly after the kingdom was established, the people of this region forsook the true worship of our Lord; stopped listening to His Word, and speaking His Word, but instead listened to the false gods of their neighbors, and started speaking false prayers to false gods. As we have read in the daily readings over the last several weeks from the daily lectionary of The Lutheran Hymnal and which are printed in your announcements, we read about Jeroboam and his sin in establishing places of worship outside of Jerusalem, by building altars for false worship and making gold bulls that bring to our minds the golden calf that Aaron built for rebellious Israel. Therefore,

our Lord chooses to meet the devil, the ancient enemy and serpent, where the devil's power and hold on the people of Israel is greatest.

It is in this region, that our Lord has brought to Him a man who *“was deaf and had an impediment of speech”* who they begged for Him to heal. Now, this healing is different from other healings, in that our Lord does not just simply say, *“Be healed!”* No, our Lord chooses to use His hands for this miracle. This begs the question we often ask as Lutherans, *“What does this mean?”* Could not our Lord simply have spoken the words and healed this man? Certainly, He could! But the Lord chooses to heal this man in this manner not just for his own benefit, but for ours, too. So that we could see what must be done in order to cure this world of its spiritual deafness and dumbness.

Our Lord also chooses to use external means to heal this man, to teach us that the external means of our salvation are not to be scorned, as something useless, or inferior. Holy Baptism, Our Lord's Supper, Holy Absolution, Preaching the Gospel, and the Mutual Conversation and Consolation of the Brethren, are the means by which the Holy Ghost heals us of our deafness, so that we are able to hear our Lord's Word, and they are the means by which the Holy Ghost, loosens our tongues to speak our Lord's truth and sing His praise, for they are the means in which He uses to create faith and life in all those who participate in these means of grace; all those who cling to the Lord + Jesus for salvation.

Therefore, in order that we may learn how our ears may be unstopped and our tongues loosed, and so that we might learn how we may heal this world of the same, let us look at this healing more closely. Our Lord chooses to first take the deaf and mute man aside from the crowd. This is done so that the distraction of the crowd may be removed from this man, so that our Lord will have his full attention. So too, if we desire to hear our Lord, we must come away from the crowd, that is, the world, with all of its false ruminations, so that we might hear the Word of our Lord without interruption from the world's lies. This is why we come to this place of worship—it is a place apart from the world, a sanctuary from the lies of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. Here in this place of worship we hear our Lord's Word, clearly, for He is the only One Who speaks to us here in this place; even though He may do it through the mouth of a man who is sinful like you.

Next, after our Lord + Jesus has this man's sole attention, He takes His finger and puts it into the man's ear, as if to say to this man, *“Your ears are deaf. You cannot hear. But I am going to heal you of your deafness.”* This also is true of us, for we must first understand our own deafness; that we are disobedient sinners—poor, miserable sinners,—who constantly break our Lord's commands, even when it is not our intention, for even if we keep the outward requirements of the Ten Commandments, we still possess original sin, which condemns all of us, unless we have someone to intercede for us. Also, we break the commandments, not even knowing we have done it, because we did not know it was wrong, for the detail and minutia in which the Ten Commandments must be kept is too great for us to comprehend and keep. This is why our Lord must put His finger into our ears, through His holy Word, so that our ears may be unstopped to understand our lost condition and our sinfulness. And, even though our text does not say, it is believed that this man had this condition from his birth. What that means, is that this man did not know what it is to hear. He had known no other thing. Therefore, our Lord must point out to him his imperfect condition, just like our Lord, through His Word, must point out our lost condition on account of our daily breaking the Law of God.

Our Lord does the same thing for this man's tongue, by taking spittle from His own mouth; He places it on this man's tongue. Spiritually speaking, this is our Lord's method of imparting to this man His Holy Ghost, that is to say, this is a sacramental act. This act was also mimicked in the ancient baptismal rite. Only they would touch the nose and not the tongue. When the nose was touched it was accompanied with the words, *“so that you may perceive the fragrance of God's sweetness,”* which is

another way to say, “May you smell the sweet smell of faith.” A reference to the fragrance of the anointing oil that was used during the ancient baptismal rite.

But all these things were done in the baptismal rite to point to the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, our Lord, in touching this man’s tongue with His spittle is bestowing upon him the Holy Ghost, so that he might speak our Lord’s truth and sing His praise. Our tongues must also be loosed; loosed from the bondage of speaking the lies and false philosophies of this world and its lord, the devil. Therefore, our tongues, and all those who would speak our Lord’s Word, must receive the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is bestowed upon us through the holy means of grace. First, at our Holy Baptism, and continued through Holy Absolution and our Lord’s Holy Supper, and whenever we hear our Lord’s Word preached from the pulpit, and whenever we gather together for worship in this place to share with one another our salvation from our sins through our Lord + Jesus Christ alone. Therefore, all those who wish to receive the Holy Ghost, must partake of the holy Sacraments, and not scorn them as only signs or symbols.

Finally, our Lord shows us the final step in unstopping the spiritually deaf ears of this world, by looking up to Heaven, and “*sighing*”. Now the word translated in the New King James Version as “*sighing*,” really means “groaning.” Meaning, he prayed with His whole soul to Heaven. The world needs the intercession of the Church; we need the intercession of the Church, so that we might remain steadfast in the one, true faith, and that the world might cease its enmity toward the Church, and be inclined to walk with us in meekness and in peace, as we pray every Sunday in the General Prayer.

And what was our Lord’s prayer? It was, “*Ephphatha*,” that is, “*Be opened*.” Now consider this, this man’s ears are deaf, he cannot hear what our Lord says, but our Lord still speaks the words to this man’s ears to be opened. And having spoken it the man was not only able to hear, but to speak plainly. In this we see our Lord’s work of creating faith in this deaf and mute man. This man can now hear our Lord’s Word, and speak His truth and sing His praise. The same is true of all of us who have been baptized. We are now able to hear God’s Word, and speak about our salvation in Him alone, because the Holy Ghost has gifted us with faith, which opens our ears and tongues, and causes us to cling to our Lord + Jesus Christ and His gifts to us.

Now, since we have these ears to hear our Lord’s Word, let us not stop up our ears again to His Word, but gladly and willingly hear how our Lord redeemed us with His holy, innocent and precious Body and Blood. And as we feast upon that Body and Blood today, given in bread and wine, let us rejoice as we are able to hear the words of our salvation that we are indeed forgiven of our sins through participation in this blessed sacrament. And, just as our Lord has loosened our tongues to speak and proclaim His praise, let us not continue to use our tongues to speak evil things, but let us use them to sing our Lord’s praise and give Him thanks that He has washed us in His Blood, and made us partakers of all the treasures of Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!