

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Mark 7:31-37
September 8th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Has Done All Things Well

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who hast created all things: We thank Thee that Thou hast given us sound bodies, and hast graciously preserved our tongues and other members from the power of the Adversary: We beseech Thee, grant us Thy grace, that we may rightly use our ears and tongues; help us to hear Thy Word diligently and devoutly, and with our tongues so to praise and magnify Thy grace, that no one shall be offended by our words, but that all may be edified thereby, through Thy Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, One True God, world without end. Amen.

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

Did you notice the first thing our Blessed Lord + Jesus did for the poor deaf and mute man in today's Gospel? After our Lord + Jesus departed from the region of Tyre and Sidon, a Gentile region, and came through the Decapolis—the ten cities—to the Sea of Galilee *“they brought to Him a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. And they begged + Jesus to put His hand on the man”* and heal him. But what did the Lord + Jesus do first? *“He took him aside from the multitude.”*

Now do not overlook this little detail. For details in the life of our Lord often teach us something significant about our life in God. And today's episode is no different. And from this detail we learn this: The first hope of salvation for anyone is to sever ties with those people and things that support and encourage us in ungodly living; and to break with those who tolerate anything that hurts our soul. And so our Lord + Jesus leads the deaf man away from the crowds to teach us that our life in God is a life apart from what the world calls good and right; that we need to separate ourselves from the cares of this world; that we need to leave behind the selfish desires of our flesh; and that our life in the Church is a breaking of communion with those who want our Lord + Jesus part-way, or even, not at all.

But there is more. When our Blessed Lord *“took the man aside from the multitude,”* He was not simply separating him from others. Our Lord + Jesus was also pulling the man into Himself. For He took the man aside and then healed Him. So, our Lord took the man aside precisely so that He could bring him into His healing love—in fact, into Himself. So, our Lord not only wanted to sever the man from the ungodly and ungodliness; He also joined the man to Himself and His righteousness. And our Lord + Jesus did not want to teach us to break with our former life, but also to come into communion in and with Him.

This is what we pray for at every Holy Baptism. We pray our Father “graciously to behold” the infant or child or adult, and “to bless him with true faith in the Spirit so that, by means of the saving waters...he may be sundered from the number of the unbelieving, and preserved dry and secure in the holy ark of the Church.”

Notice the words we pray. We do not simply want the child to be cut off from the unbelieving. We want him kept safe and sound in the holy catholic Church. So, our prayer is that the child is saved precisely by coming into the Church. And our prayer recognizes that there is no salvation apart from the Church, and the faith that is created and sustained within her.

But as our Lord shows us and as our own prayer teaches us, to come into communion with Christ in His holy Church is to break with ungodliness, with ungodly people, with the sinful things that gratify our flesh, and with the persons and places that hurt our soul and our life in God. As the Venerable St. Bede said, "We must not in any way suppose that salvation is possible as long as one is not afraid to cling to his disordered habits, to be delighted with idle words, or to be impaired by perverse thoughts." We must be afraid of disordered habits, and idle words, and perverse thoughts. Rather, for the good of our souls, we must both flee these things from which the Lord, by His Holy Ghost, has released us; and we must not return to them.

But as you well know from your daily struggle with sin that the pull towards meanness, wickedness, gossip, selfishness and envy is strong. Addictions of mind and body are easily formed, but are resisted only by the Lord's grace and the intercessions of the faithful, and through much self-diligence—through our constant and daily drowning of the Old Adam by contrition and faith, i.e., daily repentance of our sins and clinging desperately to the grace of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Sadly, for each of us, the devil plays on what sinful addictions we have—and our society cheers us on to give in, to feed our desires, to live as we please and to do whatever we want. Our own mind even rationalizes our sin by saying, "I'm not hurting anyone" and "God will still love me and forgive me."

Yet how can God love the man who harbors anger, or the woman who loves to gossip, or the man who covets what another person has, or the woman who thinks only of herself? And how can these things hurt no one, when they threaten our very own soul?

The way out is by the finger of God, which is the Holy Ghost. For that is how the Lord healed the man in today's Gospel miracle. He "*put His fingers in the man's ears, and He spat and touched the man's tongue.*" What is the Lord's finger but the Holy Ghost? And what is the spit and the touch, except the grace and mercy of God the Father given in the waters of Holy Baptism? And so, the man is healed by God's grace through the work of His Son + Jesus, and the pleading and intercession of his friends who beg our Lord + Jesus to heal him. And so too are we.

For just as the deaf man's friends brought him to the Lord to be healed, all our friends—all the saints on Earth and in Heaven; the holy catholic Church—prayed to God for us at our Holy Baptism, that by the waters of Holy Baptism, our Lord + Jesus would place the finger of His Holy Ghost within our ears and sigh into us so that the Word of God that now is written deeply within our hearts. Our Lord God has heard their prayers, and has acted on our behalf. He has touched us with the spittle of His own flesh and blood. And with our Lord + Jesus living in us—in our flesh and in our bones—we now have the courage to live against our fears, and live against the sin that still wells up within us. We have the courage to speak where others are silent, to bless rather than to curse, and to confess the Lord + Jesus Christ as Lord of all in the face of the devil and the world, and even our own sinful flesh.

But let us not leave it there. For then we may be saved, but we are not yet safe. Then we may be delivered, but not yet rescued. Let us not forget what our Lord + Jesus did first. First, He pulled the man aside. First, our Lord beckoned this poor man into Himself. First, our Redeemer drew him away from those who wished to lure him back into his former ways. And first, our Blessed Lord + Jesus brought and led the man into the safety and comfort of His own loving embrace. For this man our Lord + Jesus did all things well. He took Him aside—away from the world. He gave Him the Holy Ghost

through the means of His grace. And, He restored His hearing and His speech, so that he could hear the Word of God and proclaim the all the good things that the Lord + Jesus had done for Him.

The same is true with us. Our Lord + Jesus has done all things well for us, too. He has sundered us from the number of the unbelieving so that we might be preserved, safe and secure, in the holy catholic Church—in the holy Ark of Christendom. Our Lord + Jesus has broken the ties that bound us together with those who wish us harm, with those who threaten our children and faith, with those who urge us to tolerate heresy, and with those who pervert the holy Faith. And He has given us a place in His holy catholic Church, and a seat at His heavenly banquet, of which we enjoy a foretaste of every Sunday. Let us not flee from His Church. And neither let us seek compromises simply to avoid hard choices or to live the façade of tranquility and peace. Instead, let us flee for refuge to His infinite mercy He gives us in His holy catholic Church, for there is our Lord, eager to embrace us and ready to bring us more fully into communion with Him through the work of His Finger—the Holy Ghost—in the means of grace. Here, in this place, our Lord is ready and eager and willing to keep us dry and secure in the Holy Ark of Christendom for all eternity. For He does all things well, especially for the healing of our soul and to bestow upon us salvation. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

O Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who by Thy Almighty Word didst make the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak, we draw nigh unto Thee in all our bodily and spiritual needs, for there is none to help us save Thou alone; and we humbly beseech Thee, touch with Thy divine power our diseased members and our diseased heart, open our ears to hear Thy Word, loose our tongues to speak righteousness, and fill our hearts with the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that, beholding the wonders of Thy grace, we may confess Thy Name before men, and praise and glorify Thee, Who doest all things well, and Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!