

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Mark 7:31-37  
August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Augusta, GA  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Ephphatha!

*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.

On Mount Sinai when the Triune Lord God Almighty came to His people to give them the Ten Commandments—when He came to be with His people—the people of Israel “witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.” For the immutable, all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present Lord and Creator of all things; the perfect, holy and sinless Maker of the world is frightening to a people who live in sin daily and break the Commandments continuously. That which is holy cannot subsist with that which is unholy. The people of Israel—indeed all of mankind—cannot meet the Lord God Almighty in this fashion and not be shaking in fear, for they realized their sinfulness and their unworthiness to be in the presence of the perfect God Almighty, even as we realize every day of our poor, miserable sinful lives.

This is why the Lord God has come down to mankind in the Person of the Lord + Jesus. The second Person of the Trinity has come down to dwell with mankind, because this was the only way that He could be with His people. Even though He remained without sin, and mankind remained in their sinfulness, He could be with us and dwell with us. Indeed, He could not only live with mankind in His flesh, but He could eat with them, and talk with them, and listen to them, and even touch them. The Lord of all things—of all creation—can dwell with His people after He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

We see this evidenced in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Mark. This is one of only four pericopes from the Gospel of the Evangelist St. Mark (Easter and Ascension (both of which are from chapter sixteen), the feeding of the four thousand (which follows today’s reading in chapter eight, and which we heard a few weeks ago), and the healing of this deaf mute (which is only recorded by the Evangelist St. Mark) in today’s Gospel reading. We see in this Gospel our Lord + Jesus behaving in a very personal way with this deaf and dumb individual. The perfect, innocent, sinless Son of God, Who

created Heaven and the Earth—Who came to the people of Israel on Mount Sinai in thunder, lightning and fire and smoke—in His assumed human flesh can now interact with this deaf man who was brought to Him in a very personal way.

The people who witnessed the Lord God on the mountain trembled in fear and stood afar off, but this man is able to be taken by the Lord + Jesus away from the crowd so that the Lord + Jesus might deal with the deaf and mute man in a personal way. The Lord + Jesus puts His fingers in the deaf man's ears, as if to say, "I'm going to heal your ears." Then He wets His finger with His spittle and places it on the mute man's tongue as if to say, "I'm also going to heal your speech impediment." For those who cannot hear also have difficulty speaking, because they cannot hear the words that they are trying to produce, and so they have an impediment in their speech. The Lord + Jesus, the Creator and Maker of all things, is going to heal this deaf mute, and He lets him know this by touching his ears and tongue.

This is how personal the Lord of All Things can be with His people through the Second Person of the Trinity. No longer do the people of God need to tremble in fear and stand afar off on account of their manifold transgressions. Now, because the Lord + Jesus has come in the flesh—in our flesh, but without sin—He can dwell with us and heal us of all our sins and iniquities. And make no mistake that this deaf and mute man is this way on account of sin dwelling in this world. It is because of sin that this man is deaf and mute. In this way, sin has so corrupted our world that our bodies are imperfect, as are our minds, which lead us into all sorts of sins of thought, word and deed. Sin has so corrupted us, that we are without excuse when we break the Law of God. We deserve His eternal wrath and displeasure on account of our manifold transgressions. We also need healing from the Lord + Jesus.

There are many in this world who would question the love of the Lord God Almighty on account of this. "If the Lord God is such a loving God," they would say, "why did He allow mankind to fall into sin." They say the same thing about the Ten Commandments: "why would a loving God give commandments to a people who cannot keep them; who break them daily." The answer is simple. When we realize our sinfulness—when we realize our weak nature—stop looking inside of ourselves for our salvation. We look instead to the One Who can heal us of all of our iniquities and forgive us of all of our transgressions. When we realize our sin, we come to the One Who can heal our trespasses and sins.

Just like the crowds in the Gospel reading who realized that this deaf and mute man could be healed by the Lord + Jesus. They brought him to the Lord + Jesus and begged Him to heal him. From this point the Lord + Jesus deals only with the deaf and mute man. He takes him away from the crowd and deals only with him, so that this man may have the Lord's full attention, and that he may give full attention to the Lord + Jesus.

In this we see our Lord's compassion. Our Lord does, as the Psalmist sang, make haste to help and deliver us. He makes haste to come to us, His people, and heal us of our sins and trespasses. He makes haste to help and deliver this poor deaf and mute man by putting His fingers in his ears and mouth. This is how the Lord God Almighty desires to be with His people. This is how the Lord + Jesus wishes to interact with those who need His help and deliverance. This is how the Triune Lord God wants to be with and interact with us His chosen and elect people. He desires to be this intimate with us in healing us of all of our sins and iniquities.

This deaf and mute man only serves as a pattern that the Lord + Jesus followed. In the same way that the Lord dealt with this man, He desires to dwell with us. He put His fingers in the man's ears and healed his hearing. He put His spittle on the tongue of the man and healed His impediment of speech. The Lord + Jesus heals us of our sins and transgressions in a similar way. He uses the Finger of God—the Holy Ghost—to preach into our ears the Gospel of the saving grace found in Him alone.

The Holy Ghost—the Finger of God—opens our closed ears to hear the Word of God. We hear what our Lord + Jesus has done for us. We hear that our Lord + Jesus took upon Himself our flesh in order that He might redeem us from sin, death and the devil by perfectly fulfilling the Law of God and suffering on our behalf. We hear that the Lord + Jesus was hung upon the tree of the holy cross so that He might pay the penalty of our sin. Indeed, the Finger of God—the Holy Ghost—is preaching into our ears right now the saving and faith-creating Gospel of our Lord + Jesus Christ. He is opening up our ears so that we can hear that salvation is for us; that our Lord + Jesus loves us enough to come down and dwell with us in a personal way.

The Lord + Jesus used means to heal this deaf and mute man. He uses means to heal us of our sins and iniquities, too. In Holy Baptism, the Blood of Lamb shed on the cross covers over our sins, and makes us holy and blameless before the Triune Lord God. In Holy Baptism, we no longer have to cower in fear and stand afar off like the Israelites did at Mount Sinai, but we can come to this holy house and rejoice in our Holy Baptism; rejoice that our sins have been drowned and destroyed in the waters of Holy Baptism; that we have been covered with the Blood of the Lamb, and stand before the Lord God as perfect and sinless new creations by the power of the Holy Ghost working in us through faith.

Whenever we make the sign of the holy cross, we remember the words spoken to us at Holy Baptism; that we were baptized into the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We bear His Name. We are His. He came down from Heaven to be with us, and make us His people. He comes to us because we were unable to reach Him. He comes with haste to us in our flesh, so that we can be healed and helped and delivered by Him. He does this by sighing to the Lord God and speaking into our ears, “Ephphatha!”, that is, “Be opened!” And our ears are opened by the Holy Ghost to hear His holy Word.

He even looses our tongues by placing upon them His very Body in bread, and His very Blood in wine. His Body is placed upon our tongues as we kneel at this altar. His Blood is poured into our mouths as we kneel at this altar. Through this Body and Blood given and shed for the remission of our sins, we receive our Lord + Jesus. We receive Him in a personal and intimate way. The Lord of All Things, the Creator of Heaven and Earth Who thundered and lightnined, and sounded the trumpet and filled the air with smoke on Mount Sinai, comes to us and interacts with us in a way that the people of Israel did not enjoy on that mountain. They were forced instead to tremble in fear and stand afar off. We, my dear friends, can come to the Lord + Jesus and meet Him in this place, and beg Him to heal us of all of our sins and transgressions.

We can come to this place and beg our Lord + Jesus to open our ears to hear His holy Word, and loose our tongues to praise His holy Name. And He does that very thing from the very beginning of the Liturgy. The first words we hear are the words that made us His co-heirs with Him and washed away our sins, “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” Throughout the Liturgy He is putting His Finger—His Holy Ghost—into our ears to tell us that He is going to open them up to hear what He has done for us, that He has absolved us of all of our sins when the Minister declare that as a called and ordained servant of the Word that our sins are forgiven. He even puts His Body and Blood into our mouths at this altar so that we might know that He is going to loose our tongues to praise His holy Name on account of the remission of sins that He has given us.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us rejoice that the Lord God Almighty has come to dwell with us and interact with us so that He might take us from this vale of tears to Himself in Heaven. We were unable to approach Him, just like the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, but now in this place, our Lord + Jesus comes to us and heals us of all of our sins and iniquities, and draws us to Himself so that we may be with Him for all eternity. “Ephphatha!” “Be opened!” Your ears are healed to hear about our Lord and your tongues are loosed to praise His holy Name by the Finger of God—the Holy Ghost. Thanks be to God! 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!*