

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Mark 7:31-37
August 22nd, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Bartholomew Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Fort Myers, FL
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Immediately His Ears Were 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:

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who, according to Thy unspeakable mercy in Thy dear Son, hast called us to the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit, we beseech Thee, remove the veil from our eyes, that we may behold the glory of Thy Gospel; and grant that we all, beholding as in glass Thy glory, may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord; through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One 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.

There are those in this world who believe that the Lord God has left us; that He just created us and then set us in the world to fend for ourselves. They think that the Lord God is way up in the heavens sitting on His throne, and does bother to come and help us. They believe that He just lets us wallow in our own sin and despair, and does not care how we suffer or what pains and ailments we endure. If we look at the world, it is easy to think that this is the case. There is suffering and pain everywhere. The world, especially our society, is never more divided than it has been. There is constant fighting and warring. Strife abounds! When we focus on all the bad things in this world that are happening to us and to the rest of the world it is easy to be tempted to believe that the Lord God has abandoned us.

The Church stands in stark contrast to this sentiment. The Word of God teaches the exact opposite. This is why it is especially important in our day and age to be in the Church; to come to the Church and hear and receive the Word of God. For the Word of God tells us that the Lord God has not left us to our own devices. The Scriptures declare that our Lord God has not left us to wallow in our own sin and despair. He has not left us to bear the weight of our pain and misery in this life alone. The Evangelist St. Mark records for us today a miracle that shows us that the Lord God has not left us alone to fend for ourselves. Indeed, it shows us that He cannot leave us alone. He did not just create us and then walk away. He did not set the world spinning like a top, and only observes us from above until the top stops spinning.

It was His plan always, from before He even laid the foundations of the world, to be with His people. He did not create us so that we would be alone, but He created us so that He might dwell with us and be a part of His creation. Indeed, our Lord + Jesus, the Only-Begotten Son of God the Father, has taken upon Himself our flesh; He has become man; He was made man in order to dwell among us as one of us. This is how much our Creator, our Lord God, loves us. This is how much our Lord God loves His creation. He loves us so much that He chose to lay aside His divine nature in humility, so that He might put on Himself our human nature. He made Himself man in order that He might redeem us

from all the pain and misery that we endure in this life. He chose to do this. This was His plan from before the foundation of the world. Does this sound like the workings of a God that does not care about His people? Does this sound like a God Who does not care how His people suffers in this life?

For further proof we have the pericope for today from the Evangelist St. Mark. Notice where the Evangelist St. Mark records that our Lord + Jesus was in the beginning of the text. He was in the region of Tyre and Sidon. In the Old Testament times this region was an especially wicked and unbelieving place. They were part of some of the first places to be exiled into Assyria during the exile of the Northern Kingdom. These were coastal towns. Therefore, all the ones who brought their wares from other countries would land first in these towns. The other kingdoms of the world would also bring with them their false gods. The people of Tyre and Sidon willingly forsook the Law of Moses, and the glory of the written word of the Triune Lord God for the worship of the false gods of the other nations of the world.

Our Lord + Jesus made it a point to be in these towns; to preach in these towns; to call these towns into repentance. Our Lord God in the flesh goes to the places where the devil wreaks the most carnage. He goes to where the people of the Lord God are suffering the most. He goes to where the Word of God is suffering the most damage by the false religions of this world. This still happens today when the Church goes with the pure Word of God and the Sacraments rightly administered into this world to bring comfort and peace to those who are suffering from sin and death in this world. The Church goes to where there are people who are in need of the Gospel of our Lord + Jesus; to people who need to hear that they are not alone; that the Lord God loves them so much that He has come to them to be with them with His Word and Sacraments—the means by which He gives us all of His gifts of forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation.

That we are gathered together in one place is not our doing. We do not plant churches; the Lord God does. The Church and her ministers go to the places where there are people in need of the good news of what our Lord + Jesus has done for us. This is the ministry of righteousness that St. Paul speaks about in the Epistle reading. Our Lord + Jesus imparts His righteousness to us on account of our faith. The Church comes to us with that good news—on the lips of faithful ministers—and the Holy Ghost is the One Who does the work of planting churches. He works through the means of the Church to open our ears to hear that we are not alone; that our Lord + Jesus has come to us, and continues to come to us whenever two or three are gathered in His Name. Wherever there are two or three gathered together, there is the Church, and there our Lord + Jesus is among His people.

Our Lord + Jesus has come to us today, few that we are, to be with us and open our ears to hear that He has not left us alone in this world. But on account of His great love for us He opens our ears to hear that He has won for us salvation and deliverance from all of our spiritual enemies. He has heard our cries for help, even though our cries are often blocked by our impediment of what to speak; even though we do not often know what words to pray. He comes to us with His word of forgiveness on the lips of the pastor to give deliver us from our pain and woe. Just as we prayed in the Introit at the beginning of the Service.

We have further proof of this in today's Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Mark. Our Lord + Jesus starts in Tyre and Sidon, the place where the enemy of the devil made the most damage against the Lord God's people, but our Lord + Jesus does not just stay in one place. He moves from there to the Decapolis—the ten cities—and ends up by the Sea of Galilee. The place near where He made His earthly home. In this region, a man is brought to Him who was deaf and had an impediment of speech. There are two things to note about this: first, this man is brought to our Lord + Jesus by other people. The second thing to note is the man's condition. He is not able to hear or speak. He has a speech impediment. The same speech impediment that plagues those who cannot hear, because they cannot hear the words coming out of their mouths.

This man is brought to our Lord + Jesus by Him by other people. We can rightly assume that they were people who cared about his man—His family and friends. They are able to speak to the Lord + Jesus on this man's behalf. They are able to pray to the Lord + Jesus on this man's behalf that the Lord + Jesus might heal Him. They begged the Lord + Jesus to lay His hand on this man is what the Evangelist St. Mark records about the people who brought this man to the Lord. They prayed earnestly for this man to be healed; they begged the Lord + Jesus to heal this man. This is an example for us. When we are troubled, or someone we love is troubled by this world and the sin that exists in this world—when someone we love suffers in this world from disease and pain—we should be like these people and go to the Lord + Jesus in prayer and beg Him to heal the one for whom we pray.

This is especially true when the individual is like this man who cannot petition on his own behalf. When the person cannot hear the Word of God, or speak a prayer because of an impediment in his speech, we are to petition the Lord God on his behalf. We are to bring this person's concerns to our Lord God on his behalf.

Then our Lord + Jesus shows us how He deals with all of us who suffer in this life. When we observe the world and what is going on in the world, we are tempted to despair about our fate and the fate of the world. This is why our Lord + Jesus separates us from the world. Even has He has come into this world to be with His creation, He draws us to Himself, to be alone with us and give us His full attention. He does not leave us nor forsake us; He does not leave us alone in this world, but He instead comes to us and draws us to be with Him alone so that He might deliver us each individually; dealing with each of our individual trials and temptations by showing us that He is there specifically for us. He has come to forgive each of our individual sins by taking us away from the world and its woes and speaking directly into our ears through the lips of the ministers.

Our Lord + Jesus uses His ministers sent to us to open our ears through the Word of God and to loosen our tongues through the faith implanted in us by the Holy Ghost. We are able to hear through faith that our sins are forgiven, and speak the words of thanksgiving to our Lord God, on account of what the pastor has declared into our ears. For us He uses means. With this man, however, He has no need of using Apostles and Pastors, for He is there in the flesh with this man. The Lord God, Who has taken upon Himself our flesh, now stands before this man who cannot hear and has an impediment of speech. The Lord God has come to this man in the flesh.

After pulling this man away from the crowds to be with Him, our Lord + Jesus does not social distance Himself from this man. He does not keep six feet away and keep His hands to Himself. Rather, He sticks His fingers in this man's ears, as if to say, "I am going to fix your ears." Then He places His own spittle on the tongue of this man with a speech impediment, as if to say, "I am going to restore your speech, as well." Our Lord + Jesus then intercedes to the heavenly Father on behalf of this man crying out one word, "Ephphatha!" Our Lord cries out on behalf of this man that his ears would be opened, and that his tongue would speak. Immediately his ears were opened, and his tongue was loosed so that he spoke plainly.

This is the way that our Lord God desires to deal with all of us. He has not left us alone as some erroneously believe. He desires to be with us and heal us of all of our impediments. Our sins are forgiven when we hear the words of absolution; when we hear that we are forgiven. For faith clings to the promise and declaration of forgiveness. When our Lord + Jesus speaks healing to us through the lips of His ministers, we believe that word spoken to us. We believe that our Lord + Jesus has come to be with us and heal us of our physical and emotional and spiritual ailments. The world desires to draw us away from the help and deliverance found in our Lord + Jesus. It draws us away by focusing our attention on all the bad things happening in this world. But our Lord + Jesus has made a place for us to come to hear His Word and be strengthened in our faith by the work of the Holy Ghost. He draws us away from the world to be alone with Him and His gifts in the holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

Wherever two or three are gathered in His Name, there He is with us. He is here with us right now in His Word and Sacraments. Our Lord God has come to be with us. He is here. He has not left us alone. May our ears ever be open to hear this good news, so that we may proclaim in faith all the good things that our Lord + Jesus has done for us. 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!