

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Mark 7:31-37
August 27th, 2023
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Maketh the Dumb to Speak

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, "He hath done all things well; He maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

Prayer in Pulpit before 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 hearts, 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.

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

We are presented today by one of the few Gospel readings in the Church's year from the Evangelist St. Mark. The Gospel of St. Mark is read only five times in the Church's year: Easter, Ascension, Trinity 7 (which is the feeding of the four thousand), today (Trinity 12), and the Wednesday of Ember Week in September. And I usually add a sixth one in the Midweek Lenten services. So, this Gospel of St. Mark is not used very often in the Church's year. The Gospels are heavy with readings from Sts. Matthew, Luke and John. That means that when the Church picks a Gospel from St. Mark, we are to perk up our ears and listen.

It is especially true today as we are presented with a healing by our Lord + Jesus. While our Lord is traveling from Tyre and Sidon on the far western and northern edge of the land of Israel, through the Decapolis, the ten cities in the center of northern part of Israel, on His way to the Sea of Galilee on the eastern and northern part of the country, we are told by the Evangelist St. Mark that a deaf and dumb—that is, mute—man was brought to our Lord. They desired for our Lord to lay hands on him. We are told the exact reason, but we can assume that they meant for the laying on of hands to cure this man of his inability to hear and speak.

You will notice that our Lord + Jesus does not actually lay hands on this person. We usually assume from the text that our Lord took His finger and stuck it in the man's ears as if to say, "I am going to heal your hearing" and that He spit onto His fingers and placed them on the dumb man's tongue as if to say, "I am going to cure your speech as well." But, my dear friends, in the Greek language the word "he" is ambiguous. All the instances of the word could be referring either to our Lord or the deaf and dumb man. It could rightly be understood that the Lord simply stuck His fingers in His own ears and

touched with spittle His own tongue. He could have also taken the man's finger and touched the man's ears and tongue. The Greek leaves it ambiguous. Well, what does that mean?

The fact that the word "he" in the Greek is ambiguous is purposely there by the Holy Ghost to ward off those who would insist that this man had to be healed by the touch of the Lord + Jesus. If our Lord has to touch the ears and tongue of this deaf and dumb man in order to cure him of his inability to hear and speak, what does that mean for the healing of our spiritual deafness and dumbness? The Lord + Jesus is not physically present among us to cure us malady. How do we get healed?

And make no mistake, this deaf and dumb man is the spiritual representation of all of us who were born spiritually deaf and dumb. We were born dead in our sins and trespasses. A dead person can neither hear nor speak. Our Lord had to awaken us and bring us back to life in order that we might hear Him and sing His praise. How did that happen for us? It happened the same way that it happened for this deaf and dumb man from the Gospel of St. Mark. He was healed by the Word of the Lord. We are also cured of our spiritual deaf and dumbness by the Word of the Lord God.

This is why the Greek language leaves the "he" ambiguous. It is so that we see exactly how this man was healed. He was healed by the Word of the Lord + Jesus. What words did our Lord use? It was one word really: "Ephphatha!" Our Lord is able to open the ears of this deaf man and unstop the tongue of this dumb man with just one word: "Ephphatha!" St. Mark tells us that this word means "Be opened!" But the English once again fails to capture the full intent of the Greek word that St. Mark uses to explain "Ephphatha!" It is not simply "Be opened," but "Be opened up completely." It is not just asking that a door or window be opened, but that the whole house—walls, roof, and everything—be removed so that the entire house is open. This man does not just have his hearing and speech restored, but he is granted to hear and speak fully and completely. He is not only able to hear and speak with his physical ears and tongue, but is also granted spiritual ears and a tongue to hear the Word of God and sing His praise.

This is how the Lord + Jesus deals with us who were born spiritually deaf and dumb. We are also cured by the Word of God. This man was cured with one word, "Ephphatha!" Our spiritually deaf and dumb ears, tongues, and hearts were opened up with an even greater word! That word that opened our ears to hear the Word of God, and loosed our tongues to speak His Word, and turned our stony hearts into fleshly hearts was the very Name of the Lord God. This was the Word that was connected to the means of water when we were baptized at the font with the Name of the Triune Lord God. Our ears, tongues and hearts were opened through Holy Baptism with the words with which we are blessed with at the beginning of every Divine Service: In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

We remember this great gift every day. We remember every morning when we get up and make the sign of the holy cross and say, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" that our Lord God has opened our ears to hear His holy Word, and loosed our tongues to speak and sing His praise. We hear these words every day throughout our day, whenever we remember our Holy Baptism. We even lay down to bed each night with those words ringing in our ears as we make the sign of the holy cross and say one last time for the day, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

In this way our Lord God keeps our ears open and our tongues loosed, and our hearts filled with faith in Him, for He continues to work through His Word every day to keep us in the one, true faith until He calls us to our eternal home in Heaven. And our Lord does not just give us this word alone, but by His grace He continues to preach the Gospel into our ears by the lips of the minister from the pulpit. He opens our ears to hear that our sins are forgiven, absolved, whenever the minister speaks those words of absolution to us. We have forgiveness, life and salvation through the Word of the Lord God, because

the Holy Ghost works through the Word to create and sustain faith in us through the Word of God.

Even though we began our Service hearing the Word of God, and have continued to hear the Word of God throughout the Service; even though our Lord has been at work the entire time opening our ears and loosing our tongues to hear that we have salvation in Him alone through His works and merits alone, in a little while He will continue to make us dumb persons to hear once again of His great works of salvation for us. For we will remember and proclaim His death on our behalf when we gather around this altar and receive our Lord's Body and Blood in bread and wine.

This meal—this foretaste of the feast of Heaven—is indeed the true and substantial Body and Blood of our Lord + Jesus given and shed in His death for the remission of all our sins. The bread and wine which we consume is the very Body and Blood of our Lord + Jesus because He attaches to the physical means His precious Word. The *Verba Domini*, the Words of Institution, the very words which our Lord spoke when He instituted this Holy Supper for us poor, miserable sinners are spoken over the bread and wine. Once again, it is His Word that creates and sustains. It is His Word that connects His Body and Blood in, with and under the bread and wine. And by it we are renewed in our faith toward Him and in fervent love for Him and our neighbor.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us perk up our ears and hear the Word of the Lord spoken for our benefit. For He desires that we hear His Word and be granted the strengthening of our faith in Him and His sacrifice to redeem us from sin and death. Let us also, having had our tongues loosed to speak and sing His praise, give Him thanks for all that He has done for us. For we were indeed born deaf and dumb trapped in our sins and trespasses, but He has opened up completely our ears to hear His Word and He has loosed completely our tongues to give Him thanks and praise, and He has completely turned our sin-filled hearts of stone into fleshly hearts filled with faith in Him. What great things our Lord + Jesus has done for us! Let us give Him thanks and praise always for His great gifts! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee 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!