

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Mark 7:31-37
September 7th, 2025
St. Titus Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Athens, GA
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald P. Dulas

Ephphatha!

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“And He took him aside from the multitude privately, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spat, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, ‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’ And his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.”

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.

My dear friends, you have heard me say countless times that the Holy Ghost works through means. This is taught in the Holy Scriptures, this is taught in our catechism, and it is taught in our Lutheran confessions, the Book of Concord. The Holy Ghost does His work of sanctification, that is, making us holy, through the pure preaching of the Word of the Lord God, and the right administration of the Blessed Sacraments. This is why it is so important that we be where the Lord God promises to make us holy: here in this place gathered together with other believers in Christ, receiving the gifts of the Lord God, and receiving the benefits of the work of the Holy Ghost. This work is beneficial to us, however, only when we do not resist the Holy Ghost. When we do not give our full attention during the Service, when we are constantly checking our phones, watches, or the clock on the wall to see how much longer we need to be here, or when we are just here out of habit, and not because we want to receive the gifts of the Triune Lord God, we are resisting the work of the Holy Ghost, and therefore, He can do not good work in us.

Not only should we be concerned about our own reception of the working of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace, but we should also have a care for those we love and know. Not everyone we invite to join us here in this place is going to take us up on our invitation. Sometimes it requires

years of invitation for them to join us, and not only be here in person, but take to heart the teachings and instructions that come from the Word of the Lord God, and to want to joyfully receive the gifts bestowed upon them in the Blessed Sacraments. We are given an example of the work of the Holy Ghost in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Mark today. The Lord + Jesus is presented with a deaf and dumb mute. Make note that this man does not come of his own accord. He is brought by his friends. They cared enough about him that they wanted his affliction cured.

We cannot know how much this deaf man with an impediment in his speech understood. Sign language had certainly been in use with there being records of hand signals being used as early as 5th century BC in Greek lands. But formal sign languages that we know today, did not exist until the 17th century AD. Therefore, his sign language probably only consisted of the most basic of hand signals: "I am hungry," "I am thirsty," "I have to go to the bathroom," etc. There was also the possibility that he could have used a writing tablet to express what he wanted, assuming he was taught to read and write. The point I am getting at is that we cannot know how much he knew about the work of the Lord + Jesus; His healing miracles, and the like.

His friends knew, though. They had most likely heard about what the Lord + Jesus had done for others, and desired to have their friend restored to full hearing and speaking. Just prior to the events of today's Gospel reading, we are told that the Lord + Jesus was in the region of Tyre and Sidon. This is how today's pericope begins, with the Lord coming out of Tyre and Sidon. When He was in that region, He had met the Syro-Phoenician woman we hear about during every Lententide. She was the one who would not stop begging the Lord + Jesus to heal her severely demon-possessed daughter, and the Lord seemed to rebuff her by ignoring her at first, and then telling her that only the sons receive the bread. To which she replied, "Yea, Lord; even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." On account of her great faith, her demon-possessed daughter was healed at that very hour. It is quite possible that this deaf and mute man's friends had heard of that event, and desired the same for their friend.

Therefore, they bring this man who was deaf and had an impediment of speech to the Lord + Jesus. And it is here where we see how the Lord + Jesus works in us, and our friends who we invite to join us here in this place, through the Holy Ghost. Our Lord takes this man away from the crowds. We come into this holy place away from the cares and concerns of this world, so that the Lord's focus is only on us, and our focus is only on Him. The deaf and dumb man has the Lord's full attention, and the Lord has his full attention. Then the Lord does some things that a germaphobe might find disgusting. He put His fingers in the man's ears, and spat and touched the man's tongue. Make note this is not done because our Lord + Jesus needs to do this in order to heal the man. The touching of his ears and tongue are not necessary things for the Lord. They are necessary for the deaf and mute man.

It is as if our Lord + Jesus is telling the deaf man what He is about to do. In essence, the Lord is using sign language to tell the man that He is going to heal his ears so that he can speak, and He is going to heal the man's tongue so that he can speak plain. The means of the Lord's grace with this man are not because the Lord needs to use them, but because this man needs them. We use the means of grace, because this is how the Lord + Jesus promises to come to us poor, miserable sinners. He forgives us of our sins, grants us eternal life, and rescues us from the power of the devil and our other worldly enemies, through the means of grace. It is through these means by which the Holy Ghost works. The Lord + Jesus is doing the same thing for this deaf and mute man, He is healing him by His Word.

The Word that our Lord uses to heal this man is "Ephphatha!" The Evangelist St. Mark gives the interpretation, "Be opened." This Word of the Lord + Jesus opens this man's ears, and looses his tongue, so that he can hear clearly and speak plainly. The same thing happens to us, and the friends who we invite to join us here. The Lord + Jesus speaks into our ears that we have been washed in the

waters of Holy Baptism, that the Old Adam has been drowned and killed, that we have been crucified with the Christ, so that just as He rose again from the grave, we too, now walk in newness of life. Death has no power over us. And we remind ourselves of this whenever we make the sign of the holy cross and repeat the Name that was placed upon us in Holy Baptism. This is how we begin every Divine Service, with a remembrance of our Holy Baptism. This is a blessing from the Lord God. This is why the Minister turns to the congregation and blesses them with the Invocation and the sign of the cross. We make the sign of the cross at the same time reflecting in our hearts upon the great gift bestowed upon us by the Lord God. By this washing of the Word and water, our ears have been opened to hear about the grace that our Lord God has shown upon us by the work of the Lord + Jesus.

Our Lord + Jesus is abundant in His grace and mercy to us. He not only put His fingers in the ears of this deaf man, but also upon his tongue, to show that he will be healed of all of his impediments. The Lord was also showing us by Whom we will be healed of our spiritual deafness. The Finger of the Lord God is the Holy Ghost. It is He that unstops our spiritually deaf ears to hear about the mercy and compassion of our Lord + Jesus for us poor sinners. The Holy Ghost uses the pure preaching of the Word of the Lord God to unstop our ears. He proclaims to us by the Minister that our sins are forgiven for the Christ's sake. He preaches into our ears the good news of what our Lord + Jesus has done for us both in perfectly fulfilling the Law, and in suffering our punishment upon the tree of the holy cross. This good news the Holy Ghost delivers to us through the pure preaching of the Word of the Lord God from this pulpit. So that we receive the absolution from the pastor as from the Lord God Himself, and we receive an expanded absolution in the sermon from the pastor as from the Lord God Himself. The preaching done from the pulpit is not just the minister's Words but they are the words commanded by the Lord to preach into our ears so that we may take comfort in the forgiveness of sins that the Lord desires to bestow upon us.

The work done in us in Holy Baptism, and the forgiveness declared to us in the Absolution, receives its sign and seal in this Sacrament that we receive from this altar. Here our Lord + Jesus gives us His very Body and Blood in, with, and under the bread and wine, for the remission of our sins. He places Himself upon our tongues, so that we may have the healing of our souls. All this our Lord + Jesus does for us through the means of grace.

This is why, my dear friends, it is so important for us to gather together in this place in His Name to receive His gifts, for our Lord + Jesus has promised that wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name, there He is in the midst of them. Our Lord + Jesus is here with us today. He is here in His Word and Sacraments healing our spiritually deaf ears, and our tongues that are spiritually impeded to sing His praise. He has opened our ears to receive His Word, and He has loosed our tongues to sing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us not neglect the gathering together with one another. Let us joyfully come to this holy place and receive our Lord's gifts from the Minister, so that the Finger of the Lord God, the Holy Ghost, may work with us, yea, work in us, to will and to do by the Lord's gracious command. And, having received this gracious healing with joy, let us also go out into this world, and continue to invite those who are willing to listen to come and receive healing from the Lord + Jesus even as we have. This deaf and mute man's friends cared enough for their friend that they brought him to the Lord + Jesus, and the Lord + Jesus fulfilled the request of his friends. May the Almighty Lord God and Father, also fulfill our request to heal all those who come into this holy place, and receive His wonderful gifts of grace and mercy. 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!