**Be Opened!**

**Mark 7:31-37**

Trinity XII – 8.30-2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today's text finds Jesus in the region of the Decapolis (10 cities), doing what He does everywhere – teaching, preaching and healing the sick. With the word, “Ephphatha” – “Be Opened” He opened a man's ears and mouth.

This man Jesus healed was deaf ***AND*** had a speech impediment, later in the text called mute – he could not hear and was unable to speak. Yet, these physical ailments were easily overcome by the Son of God, true God who took on human flesh to dwell among us and lead us to His Father.

We all desire to be physically healthy. We all desire to have all our body parts function in their appropriate manner. We all want to be able to speak with and hear all our friends and family (of course masks also make that difficult). We sometimes take for granted this God-given ability.

Yet, how many of us are both deaf and dumb when it comes to spiritual things? Do you daily hear God's Word? Or read it? The deaf mute in our text spoke poorly before Jesus healed him, but afterwards he spoke plainly. Do you speak plainly? Do you speak plainly about the marvelous deeds of your God for you? Do you speak plainly about all that Jesus has done for you and for all people?

There are times in our faith life that we are either deaf or mute – and sometimes even both. It is easy to come to church on Sunday morning. But sometimes our minds wander: “What should I make for dinner?” “I wonder which games will be on TV today?” “I cannot believe the Herpolsheimers are not wearing masks.” Loss of focus upon the Word – whether the liturgy, the Scripture lessons, or the sermon – is a form of spiritual deafness, not hearing the Word.

Or maybe a sermon touches a raw nerve and you begin to ignore it, “That's just the pastor's opinion or interpretation.” It does not even matter that it is what is clearly taught in Scripture. This is another form of spiritual deafness, another way of not hearing the Word, by simply tuning it out.

Of course, then there are the times when we having something else planned for a given Sunday. We go do that and figure it is OK to just skip gathering in God’s house to receive His gifts that week. That is a form of spiritual deafness – selective hearing. But also consider what kind of proclamation we make by that action? It is saying that “whatever it is we are doing” was more important than gathering to hear God’s Word – and it is a clear proclamation to all those who know us that we have a priority. This is one way of being spiritually mute.

How many times have you had an opportunity to talk to someone about Christ, yet, for some reason you neglected to do so? Maybe you were not sure how they would treat you if you said something – they might laugh at you. Or maybe you just did not know what to say. All these are examples of being a mute, spiritually mute, spiritually mute by choice.

Today's lesson has Christ healing the deaf mute, making him to hear and to speak. After so doing, Jesus ordered the people to be silent about Him and the deeds He performed. But the more He charged them to be silent, the more they talked about what He said and did.

We are so unlike those people. They walked miles to hear Jesus speak, and then followed Him, wanting to hear more. How often do you find it difficult to even give up one hour to come and hear God's Word. And considering the attendance at Bible Studies, not many want more than that one hour.

These people in our text could not keep silent about what they heard from the mouth of Christ. How often do we find it hard to even open our mouths about God even is in the presence of fellow Christians or family members.

What we need is a miracle. You need to hear God speak to you, “Be opened!”

Christ made the physically deaf to hear. He made the dumb speak. Christ made the blind see and the lame walk. Christ even raised the dead to life.

He did all these things well!

That is also why Jesus did not want them to be silent. They were more impressed with the physical healing than they were about the fact that the Son of God walked among them and brought forgiveness and eternal life, “He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.

He comes and speaks to you today. Christ, the Word of God comes to us as the Scriptures are read. He comes to us as the Word which is our liturgy – all taken from Scripture. He comes to us as the preached Word, the Word of Christ proclaimed.

Christ, the one who died for the sins of all mankind, died for the sin of our willful spiritual deafness and muteness. Our rebellious, sinful flesh made us deaf and dumb, Christ died for that rebellious spirit.

In the waters of baptism we are cleansed of our rebelliousness and given a new spirit, a spirit which no longer tunes out God, nor clamps shut our mouths, but desires to please Him. In baptism we are touched by the Word made flesh – ears opened to hear Him and mouths open to proclaim His praise.

Christ opens our ears to hear with His healing Word of forgiveness. As our sins are pronounced forgiven, God works faith in us through the Word as we hear it. So, as Christ commands me to proclaim, let it be to you; I forgive you your sometimes-deaf ears and your sometimes-mute tongue – in the name of Jesus.

Although we were spiritually deaf, God opens our ears as He works through the Word, so that we are moved to hear His Word with open hearts. “Be opened,” and our hearts, our ears and our mouths are opened by the Word of God to hear of His marvelous deeds in Christ, to give thanks and praise, and proclaim those deeds to others.

When our hearts are opened, we grow in faith. As we grow in faith, we are emboldened to speak about our God and what He has done for us. As you hear more about Christ's work for your life, the more your desire to tell others about what Christ has done for you – and for them – and that He wants to be a regular part of their life as well. You proclaim that He wants to heal them of their deaf ears and mute tongues so that they too may hear of His marvelous deeds and speak of His marvelous works.

Your mute tongue is loosed to speak boldly. As those in today's lesson became witnesses who could not keep quiet about Christ, you know the full the message of Christ. It is a message that begs to be told. And with opened ears and loosed lips, we are compelled by our healing to speak to others.

Yes, we have been healed by the Word Incarnate as God speaks to us. Be opened! Hear and speak! In the name of Jesus. Amen.