**Lay Hands?**

**“Be Opened!”**

**Mark 7:31-37**

Trinity XII – 09.04.2022

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

Mark is the only evangelist to record this miracle of Jesus healing this particular deaf man with a speech impediment. I know you heard it, but I’d like to read to you what took place again.

And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

First, we note that they brought this man to Jesus. His friends and family members we assume. Next, we notice that the man is deaf, he cannot hear. And finally, that he had a speech impediment.

Mark does not declare that he was mute – the inability to speak or make any noise. So, while not indisputably clear what is meant by ‘a speech impediment,’ he was not able to be clearly understood. You may have heard people speak who have been deaf since their youth and have some inkling of what this may have sounded like.

While that might be one possibility, our text does not spell out specifics. It is pure speculation to say that this man may have been deaf from birth, or that something happened early in life so that he never learned to speak clearly. It may have been something else entirely.

No matter how it happened, this man was deaf and he had a speech impediment. He could not hear, nor could he make himself be understood by speaking with his mouth. It was such a problem that they brought him to Jesus. They wanted Jesus to lay hands on him. They wanted Him to touch the man and heal him.

We understand their thinking. We believe that human flesh needs physical contact for healing. For a physician to heal, they need to touch the body. Sometimes even surgery is required – cutting into a body, mutilating it in order to bring healing.

Jesus took the man away from the crowd. As the man was deaf, we presume that a touch was given to get his attention. There is every possibility that Jesus took him by the hand and led him away.

Once apart from the crowd, how would Jesus inform him of the purpose for which He had taken him aside? Many are those who claim that Jesus touched the man's ears, spat on His own fingers, and touched the man's tongue with His spit drenched finger.

Would you let a stranger do that?

We presume this man had not heard the gospel. That he did not know who Jesus was. Being deaf could he understand any of what was going on?

Probably not!

After all, they had brought him ***TO*** Jesus. In part because the man did not know to need Jesus?

After taking him aside, Jesus has to communicate with the man His intentions. Jesus put His ***own*** fingers into His ***own*** ears, and after spitting touched His ***own*** tongue.

Many believe that all the touching was done ***to the man BY Jesus***. They want to believe that Jesus brought about healing by laying hands on the man. Why?

Do such people not understand that Jesus is the Word of God who spoke all of creation into existence?

Or that Jesus spoke, and demons were cast out?

He spoke to Jairus's dead daughter. “Arise,” and life returned to her.

He spoke, rebuking wind and wave – the storm stopped, the wind calmed, and the sea ceased its raging.

Those who want the laying on of hands also do not believe that water and the Word of Christ bring a miracle of forgiveness and new life.

They do not believe that with a Word of Christ, not only are bread and wine consumed, but sacramentally united to these mundane elements are Christ’s very body and blood – that they are eaten drunk for the forgiveness of sins.

Do ***YOU*** understand that Jesus is the very Word of God made flesh?

So, after making signs so that the man would know what He was going to do in regard to his ears and mouth, Jesus acts.

*And looking up to heaven, He sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”*

Jesus sighs. What is that all about? Isaiah informs us of the reasoning for His sigh.

*Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed.* (Isa. 53:4-5)

Do you understand? Jesus sighs as He takes into His flesh this man’s wounds so that he might be healed. The ailments of our flesh are the outward manifestations of the sinfulness that corrupts us. Sinfulness takes its toll on our bodies, the wages of sin creeping into our flesh leading to death.

Jesus sighs for the human condition assaulted and assailed by sin, death, and the devil. As Jesus takes into Himself this man's ailments, this man's sinfulness, He sighs, for the weight is great.

Do you want to know where God is in the midst of your pain and suffering? Hear His sigh in our text! Know that He takes into Himself your iniquities, and in His wounds, suffering on the cross, He carries you sin! Where is He in *YOUR* pain and sorrow? Carrying it for you! In His suffering and death you see yourself, your pain and sorrow.

We also hear Him speak, “Ephphatha!” It is a simple thing He says, “Be opened!”

He has done marvelous things before in speaking.

“Let there be light!” And there was!

“Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place and let the dry land appear!” And there was!

“Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the Earth in the open expanse of the heavens!” And there was!

“Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind.” And it did!

Jesus speaks to rebuke the demon, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” It did!

To the leper who asked for healing, Jesus says, "I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately the leprosy left the man and he was cleansed.

To a paralytic He speaks what many think the strangest Word, “My son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven.” And to those who believed He did not have such authority He declares, “In order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins…” (He turned it to the paralytic) “I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home.” And He did!

Today again, the very Word of God made flesh speaks, “Ephphatha!” He says, “Be opened!”

Could anything else happen?

Immediately the man could hear and speak plainly. There was no learning how to speak plainly. There was no learning the pronunciation of words you had never heard. *Immediately his ears were opened, his tongue released, and he spoke plainly!*

This man’s mind was also opened that he could communicate. He immediately spoke plainly what he had never heard. He did not need to learn grammar and the pronunciation of words he had never heard…his mind was also opened*.*

Jesus, almighty Word of God in human flesh has compassion on this man. His command is simple, “Be opened!”

“Be opened that you may hear the good news of your salvation with your ears, and with your mouth proclaim it to the ends of the earth.”

It is this very same Word of God who speaks to you.

When this same Word of God comes forth, the miraculous happens.

Do you doubt it? Do you want something more spectacular? More exciting? Do you desire some kind of divine fireworks that you can see with your eyes?

Jesus declares today, “Ephphatha…be opened!” Forgiveness is declared to you, your ears opened for the grace of God to pour in, and your tongue released from bondage to sin and you are free to declare His holy praise.

The marvelous and miraculous works of God are performed among you on a regular basis. This same very Word that spoke, opening ears and releasing a tongue, speaks to you today. That Word does the miraculous. Do you know what that word is? Do you expect mighty things from it?

That word does what it wills, where and when it wills it. He does it whether we expect it or not. He does it according to His manner, to bring about His glory. That Word does such great things, for it is the Word of God incarnate. He is the Word who comes to you as He is delivered to you.

Christ is the wet Word…

Christ is the ear Word…

Christ is the Word you eat…

Christ is the Word you drink…

He does all things well

He opens your ears to hear and releases your tongue to speak of His marvelous deeds – for you and for all.

He has done all things well - with a Word, He strengthens your faith that you may believe these are all God’s gracious gifts which keep you now and for eternity. Amen.