☩ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. ☩

What we hear matters. Christ, several times throughout the gospels, echoes the refrain “He who has ears to hear let him hear”. That is a call to us, to all mankind, to hear and believe the word of God, to hear the Gospel, but also to repent! To correct our behavior and change. To use our ears for what God has intended them, to orient ourselves not toward passing things but eternal. It is a call from the almighty God to open our ears against the indoctrination and garbage we fill them with and to fix them on that which is actually good and holy. If we spend all of our time listening to the television, to bad theology, to anything that is contrary to the will of God, we are fools to think it doesn’t have an effect on us.

 Words matter; what we hear matters. But all too often we think we know better. We tell ourselves we are mature enough in our faith to handle it. We are strong enough not to let it affect us. But it does. Think of how much time you spend a week listening to and hearing anything but the word of God. Maybe we hear God’s word a few minutes a day, but for many this is the only time, One hour on a Sunday. But we are constantly being bombarded on all sides by advertising, political campaigns, friends and neighbors, and even often our own family who have rejected Christ in favor of the ways of the world. One hour a week is nothing compared to the horde of messaging that goes on in our culture. And that is assuming we actually pay attention for the whole hour!

And this has a disastrous effect on us. What you hear daily and constantly changes your heart and your mind. It shapes who you are and how you think, and it does it without you even realizing it. Christians with good intentions, perhaps, prioritize all sorts of worldliness rather than godliness. And today’s gospel shows us just that.

Here in the gospel, a man unable to speak or hear is brought to Christ, and Christ heals Him. As miraculous as that is, what happens afterward is what I want to draw your attention to today. The ESV translation we just read says that after the healing, the man began to speak plainly; the Greek word, however, is orthos, and the gospel writer chooses this word intentionally. This word means “rightly” and “correctly”. It is where we get our word orthodox. What Saint Mark says is more than this man regains his hearing, although this is true and wonderful in and of itself, but he hears, and this necessitates a confession! Hearing brings about the profession of the truth of Christ. He speaks according to the doctrine and orthodox teachings of Christ. He is brought from silence by the work of Christ, and brought to speech; he begins to make a confession. Christ being present for him means he must make a confession, he cannot help but do so.

And praise be to God that he does! For this is the Christian response. Christ’s presence enacts a change in this man, not just physically but spiritually. He is no longer mute and deaf but is also able to hear and speak the things of God. The sinful man has been cast aside in favor of the new man. This is what it means to come into Christ’s presence as a Christian. This is what it is to experience a God that is for you, it is to make a confession with your lips and to speak rightly about God. To submit yourself to His reason and understanding, His ways and His timing, not your own. To speak rightly about Christ requires us to know who He is and what He has done.

And that requires that we actually have open ears to hear! It means we actually need to spend time in God’s word. It means we should hear it not simply once a week or just in the morning, but give it priority. This is the voice of our Lord and God, let us listen! Find ways to teach yourself to read the bible more faithfully. Put your bible where you see it regularly, lay it on your pillow, or on your chair, so you have to pick it up and move it and be reminded by it. Listen to sermons, or theological Podcasts, read books on theology!. There is so much garbage going into our ears and minds, we would do well to increase our hearing of God’s word. For all too often, we fill our minds and lips with all manner of things that are not fitting for a Christian. And because of this all too often we give in to what we have heard the world proclaim time and time again, often without realizing it. Just be nice, love each other, it doesn’t really matter what you believe as long as you are a good person.

But that isn’t Christianity. That is a confession that isn’t focused upon God and eternal truth, but upon man and his feelings. It is a confession that confesses nothing.

And we tell ourselves it's for good reason. We tell ourselves our motives are pure and holy. After all, it's not nice to disrupt family dinner, it's not nice to tell someone you love that they are wrong. It's difficult and it's uncomfortable, and so we reason our way out of doing it. Under the guise of human reason, sensibilities, and understanding we allow and encourage all sorts of sins, vice, and wickedness.

All too often, we find ourselves with the crowd that brought the man to Jesus rather than the one who spoke rightly. We find ourselves speaking, but speaking in a way that doesn’t heed the words of Christ, speaking that on the surface looks good, holy, and god pleasing but shows a clear disregard for Christ as the Son of God. Speaking claiming to praise God, while casting Him aside and elevating the self.

Take a moment and think about it, the crowds don't seem so bad do they? It seems as if all is well; they are going out and proclaiming what Christ has done for this man with great zeal! Certainly, that can’t be a bad thing! But Christ charges them not to do it. Not just once but several times. The more Christ charges them to remain silent, they proclaim all the more zealously. They have no concern for what Christ has actually said and done. To them, it seems good, so they are going to do it, regardless of what Christ has said. Regardless of whether it is truly good or evil, it seems good to them, and that is all that matters.

Christ has charged each and every one of us just as the crowd to listen to His word, to hear with our ears what Christ has done for us, and to submit to His will. And to speak rightly. To proclaim Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins. He has charged you, but does not leave you alone to do it. Just as he came to the deaf and blind man, he comes to you in and with his word. Just as the deaf man was healed, so are you. Just as Christ pulls this man out of the crowd, out of the world, He has called you. To open your ears to His word, to place upon your tongue the word of God.

Christ, the Word of God, took upon himself human flesh, for you. He was crucified for you so that you might be filled with the very word of God, both in hearing and here in the supper, so you might speak rightly about Him. So you would have the filth of the world cleansed and your tongue and mind freed from the clouds of sin. He charges you and equips you with His word; to confess rightly, to speak orthodoxly in a world that is anything but.

Let us listen to Him, submit to Him, and confess Him as our hope and our salvation.