

CAN YOU IMAGINE,,, WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE,,, NOT TO BE ABLE TO SEE ANYTHING,,, TO COMMUNICATE,,, OR,,, TO SPEAK? IT MUST BE TERRIFYING!

FOR EXAMPLE,,, SOUTHERN NEVADA HAS THINGS CALLED “**BLACK OUTS**”. THAT’S WHEN THE POWER GOES OFF,,, YOUR LIGHTS GO OUT,,, OUR COMPUTERS AND ALL OUR PLUGGED IN ELECTRIC DIVICES STOP WORKING. AND OF COURSE,,, MOST OFTEN,,, IT HAPPENS AT NIGHT,,, LEAVING US,,, IN THE DARK! WHEN THAT HAPPENS,,, WE CAN EXPERIENCE A SIMILAR FEELING TO THE MAN IN OUR GOSPEL? WE FEEL A BIT TRAPPED IN OUR OWN HOMES!

TODAY’S GOSPEL GIVES US AN ENCOUNTER JESUS HAD WITH A PERSON WHO WAS DEAF AND MUTE.

SCRIPTURE TELLS US,,, THAT THERE WAS MAN WHO LIVED ABOUT 2000 YEARS AGO,,, WHO EXPERIENCED SOME OF THIS.

NO,,, THERE WEREN’T BLACK-OUTS,,, ELEVATORS,,, OR COMPUTERS,,, BACK THEN,,, BUT EVEN SO,,, THIS MAN WAS TRAPPED! **HE WAS DEAF,,, SO HE WAS SHUT IN A PLACE,,, WHERE HE COULDN’T HEAR ANYBODY. HE WAS MUTE,,, SO,,, NO ONE COULD RECOGNIZE HIS CRIES FOR HELP. HE NEEDED,,, TO BE OPENED UP,,, SET FREE”!**

WE THINK THAT THE MAN IN OUR GOSPEL LESSON TODAY,,, WAS BORN DEAF,,, OR WENT DEAF AT AN EARLY AGE,,, AND HIS DEAFNESS LED TO HIS INABILITY TO SPEAK.

HE COULDN’T HEAR THE SOUNDS OF OTHERS,,, SO,,, HE LIVED SHUT OFF,,, “**FROM THE WORLD OF SOUND**” THAT NORMAL PEOPLE LIVE IN.

CAN YOU JUST IMAGINE,,, THE THOUGHTS AND FRUSTRATIONS,,, OF THIS MAN,,, WHOSE MIND WAS FULLY FUNCTIONAL,,, AND WHO KNEW,,, THAT THERE WAS **SOMETHING GOING ON OUT THERE**,,, BUT,,, HE COULDN’T EVEN BE,,, A SMALL PART OF IT?

HE COULD SEE PEOPLE,,, TALKING,,, AND LAUGHING,,, BUT HE COULDN'T JOIN IN! WHEN HE TRIED,,, ALL THAT CAME OUT OF HIS MOUTH,,, WERE GARBLED MUTTERINGS.

HE COULDN'T FORM WORDS,,, BECAUSE HE'D NEVER HEARD ANYONE SPEAK. KIDS PROBABLY LAUGHED AT HIM AND THE ADULTS,,, WELL,,, THEY PROBABLY DISCOURAGED HIM FROM EVEN TRYING TO SPEAK,,, BECAUSE THEY WERE JUST TOO EMBARRASSED AND ASHAMED,,, FOR HIM!

HE KNEW,,, HE WAS TRAPPED WITHIN HIS OWN WORLD,,, HIS OWN PRISON,,, ALL ALONE,,, WITH THOUGHTS,,, ONLY HE COULD THINK.

WE CAN ONLY SUPPOSE,,, THAT THIS MAN HOPED,,, THAT SOMEDAY,,, HE WOULD BE OPENED AND SET FREE,,, THINKING; *PERHAPS THERE WOULD BE A WAY,,, FOR ME TO HEAR,,, TO TALK,,, AND TO BECOME A PART OF THE WORLD AROUND ME?*

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, HAVEN'T WE SEEN SITUATIONS IN OUR OWN "REAL LIFE WORLD" WHEN THE EFFECTS OF SIN,,, HAVE SEPARATED PEOPLE,,, FROM THE WORLD AROUND THEM? WHEN,,, FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES,,, *SOMEONE WE CARE ABOUT HAS BEEN LOCKED AWAY,,, IN THEIR OWN PRIVATE,,, DARK AND LONELY PRISON?*

WHAT ABOUT YOU AND ME? DOES THIS EVER HAPPEN TO US? WHILE WE MAY BE ABLE TO TALK,,, TO HEAR,,, AND TO UNDERSTAND,,, JUST FINE,,, *WE STILL SUFFER,,, SILENTLY!*

IN MANY WAYS,,, WE TOO ARE IMPRISONED! *HAVE YOU EVER FELT TRAPPED BY A SIN,,, THAT YOU'VE COMITTED,,, IN THE PAST?*

BY SOMETHING THAT YOU DID,,, *THAT YOU WISH,,, WITH ALL YOUR HEART,,, THAT YOU COULD TAKE BACK?* YOU'D GIVE ANYTHING,,, TO CHANGE WHAT YOU DID,,, BUT YOU CAN'T,,, AND IT TROUBLES YOU?

*THE GUILT YOU CARRY AROUND,,, FEELS LIKE A TRAP!
YOU WISH YOU COULD TELL SOMEONE,,, BUT YOU FEEL
THAT YOU CAN'T TELL ANYONE,,,*

THE RISK,,, IS TOO GREAT!

YOU TRY TO BREAK AWAY FROM THAT PRIVATE
PRISON,,, BUT EVERY TIME YOU TRY,,, THE DOOR
SLAMS SHUT IN YOUR FACE,,, AND YOU WONDER:

“WILL I EVER BE SET FREE?”

MAYBE,,, YOU'RE SUFFERING,,, FROM A SIN,,,

**THAT ISN'T YOURS? YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TO
DESERVE WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU! SOMEONE ELSE,,,**

CHOSE TO IMPOSE THIS PAIN ON YOU!

YOU WERE ONLY A VICTIM OF **THEIR DARKNESS.**

BUT,,, THAT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER,,, DOES IT?

BECAUSE,,, YOU'RE STILL SUFFERING FROM IT!

WHAT THAT OTHER PERSON DID,,, STAYS WITH YOU.

YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE PINNED DOWN BY IT AND

YOU,,, LIKE THE MAN IN OUR STORY,,, WONDER,,, IF
YOU'LL EVER BE SET FREE.

WE ALL HAVE OUR OWN PRISONS AND WE ALL NEED
TO BE OPENED AND SET FREE,,, JUST LIKE THE MAN
IN TODAY'S GOSPEL READING.

EVER SINCE THE “**FALL OF MAN**”,,, HUMANITY HAS
BEEN TRAPPED IN; **THE PRISON OF SINFULLNESS!**

(*) WHERE THERE SHOULD BE LIGHT,,, THERE'S
DARKNESS!

(*) WHERE THERE SHOULD BE JOY,,, THERE'S PAIN!

(*) WHERE THERE SHOULD BE FREEDOM,,, WE HEAR
THE MOANS OF SUFFERING CAPTIVES!

(*) WHERE GOD'S PERFECT CREATION ONCE STOOD,,,
ALL THAT REMAINS,,, IS AN EMPTY SHELL OF
WHAT IT ONCE WAS!

**THEN,,, JUST AS WE THOUGHT ALL WAS LOST,,, INTO
OUR DARKNESS,,, STEPS A MAN!**

(*) THEY SAY; THAT HE CAME INTO THE WORLD,,,
BEING BORN OF A VIRGIN!

- (*) THEY SAY; THAT HE'S **THE VERY SON OF GOD!**
- (*) THEY SAY: THAT HE'S COMING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE "**BLACK-OUT**" OF SIN!

HE'S COMING TO OPEN THE KINGDOM OF GOD,,, FOR THOSE WHO ARE TRAPPED,,, JUST LIKE HE DID,,, FOR THE MAN IN OUR GOSPEL TODAY.

THEN,,, JESUS TOOK THE DEAF AND MUTE MAN,,, TO THE SIDE,,, HE PUSHES HIS FINGERS INTO THE MANS EAR. HE SPITS AND PLACES IT,,, ON THE MANS TONGUE. JESUS USED HIS OWN FINGERS AND SPIT,,, AS A PHYSICAL MEANS OF GRACE,,, TO HEAL THIS MAN OF HIS AILMENTS.

AFTER HE HAD DONE THIS,,, AND LOOKING UP TO HEAVEN,,, HE SPOKE ONLY ONE WORD; "**EPHPHATHA**" WHICH MEANS; "**BE OPENED**".

THOSE WERE THE FIRST WORDS THAT THIS MAN HAD EVER HEARD! AND IT WAS THOSE WORDS,,, THAT SET HIM FREE! HE WAS RELEASED,,, **BY THE WORD OF JESUS** WHEN HE SAID,,, "**BE OPENED**".

NOT ONLY DID THE MAN HEAR JESUS' WORDS,,, BUT HE UNDERSTOOD,,, WHAT THEY MEANT!

HE DIDN'T HAVE TO LEARN THE LANGUAGE.

THE DOORS TO HIS PRISON HAD SWUNG WIDE OPEN AND HE WAS COMPLETELY HEALED!

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS,,, WHEN JESUS USES HIS CHOSEN PHYSICAL MEANS,,, HIS FINGERS AND SPIT,,, AND ATTACHES

THE POWER OF HIS WORD,,, TO THEM.

PEOPLE BECOME COMPLETELY HEALED AND OPENED!

- (*) WHAT ABOUT THE TRAPPED SINNERS,,, OF TODAY?
- (*) WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE AROUND US,,, WHO ARE HELPLESS,,, TO HELP THEMSELVES,,, AND;
- (*) WHAT ABOUT WE CHRISTIAN'S WHO ARE TRAPPED BY SIN?

WE NEED TO BE "**OPENED**" AND "**SET FREE**",,, JUST AS MUCH,,, AS THE MAN IN OUR GOSPEL TODAY!

JESUS KNEW THAT,,, AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHY HE CAME IN THE 1ST PLACE!

JESUS KNEW,,, WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY MAKE IT ON OUR OWN,,, AND,,, THAT,,, IF WE WERE LEFT ALONE,,, WE'D MOST CERTAINLY DIE,,, WITHOUT EVER BEING SET FREE.

THAT'S A SCARY THOUGHT,,, ISN'T IT?

NOW,,, FOR THE GOOD NEWS:

JESUS LOVES US,,, SO VERY MUCH,,, THAT HE COULDN'T JUST SIT BY AND WATCH THAT HAPPEN,,, SO,,,

HE DID SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

TO RESCUE US,,, FROM THE TRAP OF GUILT AND SHAME,,, OVER SIN,,, *OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST*,,, *CHOSE TO WILLINGLY*,,, WALK INTO A TRAP,,, WHEN JUDAS BROUGHT THOSE MEN TO THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMINE,,, THAT NIGHT.

HE ENTERED THAT TRAP WILLINGLY,,, ALLOWING HIMSELF TO BE TRAPPED,,, SO THAT WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO BE.

TO FREE US,,, OF THE SIN OF OTHERS,,, THAT PINS US DOWN,,, HE LEFT HIS OWN BODY BE PINNED DOWN BY IRON NAILS,,, TO A ROUGH PIECE OF WOOD,,, BEING PINNED DOWN,,, FOR THE SINS OF OTHERS,,, SO YOU COULD BE FREE.

TO END THE "*BLACK-OUT*" OF SIN,,, JESUS,,, *THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD*,,, ALLOWED HIS LIFE TO BE SNUFFED OUT!

JESUS DID THIS,,, BECAUSE,,, *IT WAS THE ONLY WAY THAT HEAVEN COULD BE OPENED FOR US.*

THROUGH HIS SACRAFICE,,, ON THE CROSS... THE DOORS TO HEAVEN,,, THAT WERE LOCKED,,, HAVE BEEN SWUNG WIDE OPEN FOR US!

JESUS GAVE UP HIS BODY AND BLOOD,,, ON THE CROSS,,, FOR OUR SALVATION. THE VERY SAME BODY AND BLOOD THAT IS OFFERED TO US,,, HERE TODAY,,, IN *THE HOLY EUCHARIST,,, LORD'S SUPPER!*

**FOR ALL,,, WHO ARE TRAPPED,,, BY THE BURDEN OF
GUILT AND SHAME,,, OR,,, IMPRISONED IN THE
BONDAGE OF SIN,,, OR,,, BEARING THE SCARS OF THE
SINS OF OTHERS,,,**

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, THIS IS WHAT OUR LORD
JESUS HAS DONE FOR YOU;**

***THROUGH HIS LIFE,,, DEATH AND RESURRECTION,,,
HE HAS SET YOU FREE,,, AND
WHEN JESUS SAID: “**BE OPENED**”,,,
HE FREED YOU,,, FOR ALL ETERNITY!***

THANK YOU,,, LORD JESUS CHRIST!

***THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT
+++ AMEN+++***

(1,395) WDS,,, 6 PGS