

12th Sunday after Trinity
Mark 7:31-37

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Mark 7:31-37 ³¹Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³²And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. ³⁴And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." ³⁵And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Performing miracles was part of Jesus' Ministry; he had control over all things in nature and humanity. Jesus even had command over the wind and the waters.

In Mark's gospel, Jesus healed leprosy, He healed those that were crippled: the blind, lame, and mute, He drove out demons and raised the dead to back to life. In every instance he used his Divine powers of healing to give forgiveness, and new life to those that were afflicted.

The Gospel today takes place during Jesus' Ministry in the region of Galilee. Before the miracle in today's gospel Jesus performed several miracles: feeding the 5,000, walking on water, and healing a woman's daughter, by casting out a demon that possessed her.

Jesus then went from Tyre to Sidon to the borders of the Decapolis (otherwise known as the 10 cities), which is the setting for today's miracle.

³²And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him.

You might be wondering how this man came to be in such a shameful condition? Why is anyone born handicapped or with deformities, or suffer any afflictions?

We don't know why, except that it happened as a result of sin, it's part of our fallen condition, just like all the afflictions that Jesus healed was also a result of sin. The afflictions mankind suffers from in the world today are a result of sin in our fallen state.

We have to go all the way back to Genesis Chapter 3 where sin first happened as a result of Adam and Eve disobeying God and eating the forbidden fruit. From this point on in history we live as fallen humans in a fallen world, separated from God.

We no longer walk with God and live in his righteousness, but instead are under the law and condemnation.

Since we are under the law, we cannot be under God's righteousness, for all sin and fall short of the glory of God. Paul reminds us that the wages of sin is death.

Christ came into the world to bear all of mankind's sin and become a sacrifice in man's place. Article 2 of Augsburg Confession states: "He is true God and true human being who truly 'was born, suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried' in order both to be a sacrifice not only for original sin but also for all other sins."

In verses 33-35 of the Gospel it says: **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.**

Once the Lord healed the deaf and mute man, he was able to speak clearly, and he put his gift to work in praise.

Verse 37 says: **And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.** Jesus has control over all things in nature and in the universe. Jesus healed the deaf and mute man so that mankind would see his signs and wonders and believe the miracles he performed.

Luther writes: Satan is responsible for afflicting the blind, lame, and crippled, he is the one who afflicts us with diseases and injuries and causes us to sin.

All of us are sinners and afflicted in some way. Maybe you suffer from relationships, money problems, or work problems. You might be afflicted by various health problems. We suffer from repeating the same sins over and over again.

God's Law tells us that we are sinful in thought, word, and deed. God gives us the law to convict us of our sins and lead us to repentance—to see that we are in need of a Savior.

When the time was right, God sent His Son in the flesh, to suffer, and bleed and die for all people for all time, he took all your sins and the sins of all people and died on the Cross, He rose from the grave after 3 days, never to die again.

In Holy Baptism Christ gives us new life with his Word attached to ordinary water.

Titus 3:3-6 ³For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

Through Christ Jesus, God reconciled the world to himself; he sent his one and only Son that through his death and Resurrection the sins of humanity will not be counted against

them, but instead they will receive the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. After our Resurrection in Christ, we will once and for all be healed of all our afflictions.

Revelation 21:4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

When Jesus heals the Deaf and mute man he says Ephphatha, which means "Be opened." Upon saying these Words the evil is driven out of the Man and his afflictions are healed.

This is just like part of the liturgy in the old Rite of Baptism (In Luther's order of Baptism, the priest would literally take spittle, put it on his finger and touch the right ear of the one who was being baptized and say: Ephphatha). The priest would also take spittle and touch the nose and the left ear and say: "But thou flee, devil, for God's judgment cometh speedily."

1 John 3:8 The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. In today's gospel Christ performs a wonderful miracle and work. Jesus is the helper of suffering mankind and desires to heal all afflictions with which the devil burdens us.

Whatever affliction or pain you are suffering, Christ is there to take your burdens upon himself.

In **Isaiah 35:4-7** ⁴Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." ⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; ⁷the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

Verse 37: **And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, He has done all things well.** From Jesus' birth to his death on the Cross he did everything well, in fact he did everything perfectly. He kept the law perfectly for us, he suffered and died perfectly.

Christ's ultimate healing miracle was his death and Resurrection to wash our sins away. He shed his blood and became the perfect sacrifice, so we can be counted as righteous in God's sight.

May God gift us hungry mouths to receive His precious gifts of His Son's body and blood for the strengthening of faith, forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting. Amen!

