

## The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity, A<sup>2</sup>D 2010

### Mark 7:31-37

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1 The deaf and mute man had it pretty good, even before Jesus invaded his ears and spat and touched his tongue. Even before he had friends who cared enough about him to name his problem correctly: he was deaf and mute, who didn't ignore the problem or try to define it more politically correctly: he's just hearing impaired and in need of speech therapy, he had it pretty good. When his ears didn't work and his tongue was bound, he had it pretty good. Better than you have it, at least.

2 His ears couldn't work, so he could not fill them with the filth, the venom, the poison you are so quick to fill yours with. Sure, your ears work, but not like they were meant to work. Instead of being filled with the Word of God, you let them be filled with dirty jokes, with gossip and rumors, with damnable uses of your Lord's holy name. Your ears work, but you use them for listening for praise and adoration from friends and coworkers, for listening to obscene music and movies, and for listening to false prophets who will redefine your sins into more politically-correct, socially-acceptable "differences," who will scratch just where your ears itch.

3 His tongue was bound, so he could not wield it as a weapon against his wife or trash his boss behind his back; he could not lose his temper at his children or misuse the Lord's holy name. And sure your tongue works, but not like it was meant to work. Instead of being used to praise and pray to your Lord, instead of being used to encourage, defend, and speak well of your neighbors, you use your tongue for wickedness. You use your tongue to lash out angrily at your friends, your children, or your spouse. You use your tongue to sing your own praises. You use your tongue to talk back to your parents or to slander your co-workers. You use your tongue to speak the gossip, crude jokes, and hatred that the sinful ears of others delight to hear.

4 So repent. If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out, and if your hand causes you to sin, chop it off. So if your tongue causes you to sin, cut it out, and if your ears cause you to sin, pierce your eardrums. It is better to go through life deaf and mute than to go to hell with wicked words and itching ears. Repent, and come like the deaf, mute man to the Lord who heals. What good are working ears if you fill them with vice? And what good is a working tongue if it pours forth malice?

5 Before you go looking for a scalpel or a knife, though, recall that the Lord Jesus came healing deafness and freeing silent tongues. Deafness, muteness, blindness, sickness, sadness, frailty, pain, and suffering are all signs of a bigger problem: death. And the death is a result of the root problem: sin. The miraculous healing Jesus performed for this man in the region of the Decapolis pointed to the greater miracle which He came to perform. He healed the man's deafness and his muteness, but the fellow still died. Even though he was unable to hear or to speak before Jesus stuck his fingers in his ears and spat and touched his tongue, this man was no less sinful than you.

6 There's an obvious risk in sticking your fingers into someone's ears or touching his tongue. When Jesus drew his fingers out of the deaf man's ears, when He withdrew His fingers from the man's tongue, Jesus was covered with his sin, infected with his terminal disease. So also when He sticks the fingers of His word into your ears, Jesus extracts every sin of the ear, every wicked word heard and every false word sought after. When He unbinds your tongue, Jesus gets Himself infected with every sin your tongue has committed or will commit. The Lord who opened the deaf man's ears and released his tongue took the curse of this man's sinfulness. He who knew no sin, the sinless Son of God became sin for you. And upon the cross, He bore the ultimate consequence of sin: separation from God. As He cried out in dereliction, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" His ears were deaf to the Word of His Heavenly Father and His tongue was unable to call upon Him. He was completely deaf and mute, worse

than the deaf man, worse than you. And so, cut off from God the Father, God the Son died in your place, in the place of the deaf man, in the place of the crowds astonished beyond measure.

7 He who died is He who rose. And He didn't rise spiritually; no, He rose with His body. He died to redeem you—to buy you back from death—body and soul together. He healed the physical sickness of the deaf man and the deeper spiritual cause: his sin. So He desires to heal you—both body and soul. Your ears that are naturally deaf to His Word He opened. Not in some ethereal, other-worldly way. Remember, He stuck His fingers into the deaf man's ears and commanded them to be opened. And He spat and touched the mute man's tongue. Crude, invasive, almost offensive, Jesus healed this man through a very physical confrontation.

8 The solution is even more invasive, more intrusive, more in-your-personal-space than the problem. Jesus has opened your ears to hear His Word. He has opened your ears with the *ephphatha* of Holy Baptism, creating life where there was only death, creating hearing where there was only deafness, creating speech where there was only babbling. He delivers His forgiveness as He takes you aside, apart from the crowd, and has His minister place his hand on your head, right in your personal space, so that there's no mistaking for whom these words are spoken, "I forgive you." And the Word of God presses more than a finger onto your tongue. He presses His Body onto your tongue, pours His Blood down your throat, for the forgiveness of your sins. Be opened. Continue to hear the Word of God for you. Be loosed. Continue to declare the wonderful things God has done and does right here for you. He has done all things well.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*

Pastor Jeff Hemmer