

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Text: St. Mark 7:31-37

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Do you believe in miracles? You should. Even now, the fact that you are here is evidence of a miracle, for *“It is the SPIRIT who gives life....”* The words of our LORD *“... are spirit, and they are life.”* Without these words, we are deaf and dumb. We are, as Saint Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth, without sufficiency of our own, such that, we are unable to do anything for ourselves when it comes to our sanctification, and therefore, our salvation, or as the sainted Dr. Martin Luther wrote, *“I cannot, by my own reason or strength believe in JESUS CHRIST, my LORD, or come to Him; but the HOLY SPIRIT has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”* Thus, the HOLY SPIRIT caused the evangelist, St. Mark, to record this event in JESUS’ life, which we have before us today.

So, if you will, imagine for a moment, suffering the isolation of being born deaf, of living out your life in complete and utter silence. No music, no sounds of nature; no sounds of wind in the trees, the rustle of leaves, the songs of birds, no sound of water crashing on a beach or gurgling along in a quiet stream. No sound at all of human voices, not even the sound of those you love—no sound of any kind. What a lonely and isolated existence that must be.

Add to that, the inability to speak—a sort of chain reaction, or cause and effect, brought on by your deafness. Being mute, you would have no way of communicating your most basic needs except with grunts and gestures. Imagine living in a world that you can see, yet at the same time, suffering from the very real possibility of never truly being able to engage in the life that exists all around you. This was the plight of the poor man brought before JESUS by his friends that our LORD would simply reach out and touch him.

This poor man’s circumstance is a vivid paradigm of the spiritual condition into which every human being is conceived. It is our nature because we are conceived in sin. It is, therefore, the devil’s doing to kill the body, to close one’s ears to the Gospel of CHRIST so that one cannot praise God and confess His truth with the tongue. You have heard it said, *“... faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of CHRIST.”* Without the Word of CHRIST, you have no life within you. Instead, you are deaf and dumb—a dead man walking.

One might then believe then, that the condition of this man was hopeless. After all, what happens when faith comes by hearing the Word of CHRIST, but one cannot hear? What happens when one refuses to hear? What then? With men such hearing is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.

As I said, the deafmute is the perfect example of the human spiritual condition. On our own, we are deaf to the Word of God. We are without conscience and prone to follow our every desire, no matter the consequences, no matter how perverted or deviant. Our mantra? If it feels good do it!

Without the Word of God, we are slaves to our selfishness. Self-centered, we are no less isolated than was the deafmute. Without the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST, we cannot know God's SPIRIT, nor can we know His SON, and being mute, we are unable to praise their glory—confession and prayer being the farthest things from our minds. We are closed in and shut away in miserable, empty isolation.

St. Paul writes, *“The natural man does not receive the things of the SPIRIT of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* By nature, we are worse off than simply being deafmutes, because by nature we are dead in our sins and the dead cannot speak and the dead cannot hear.

One might then believe that *our* condition is hopeless. Who will save us from this body of death? Are we forever lost? No, brothers and sisters in CHRIST! For we are loved and chosen by God whose Gospel comes not only by Word, *“... but also in power and in the Holy Spirit....”* We do not draw near to God, but He to us.

God takes us aside, out of this world of sin, heartache, and pain. He enters us first, by His Holy Spirit, who is, in truth, the Finger of God, opening our ears to the Word of life added to the blessed waters of Holy Baptism. Baptized, our tongues are set free to pray, praise, and give thanks as we look toward Heaven from whence comes our help. Our lips are opened and our tongues are loosed so that we can *“sing aloud to God our strength”* and *“make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob.”*

The faith begun by water and Word is now fed with the Bread of Life. For what is the Word of God but the Bread of Life? Our LORD has said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”* Is JESUS not that Word, the very Bread that comes down from Heaven giving life to the world, that we may eat of that heavenly food and live? He *is* that Word who was in the beginning with God and is God, who said, *“... the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”* Again, our LORD has said, *“I am the Bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”*

Such faith is evidence of our justification before our God—justification that is, even now, fulfilled in your hearing and celebrated by God and His angels. It is worked in you by God’s grace alone. Though, just as did King David, all the patriarchs, and apostles, you still suffer under the weight of your sins; though you still cry out to God for relief from all that tempts you, from all that causes you to stumble and fall, God the FATHER declares you innocent for the sake of God the SON.

This brings about a change of heart—a change we call sanctification. While justification, that is, the complete forgiveness of sins, is already a fact, even so, we continue to struggle against “... *principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places...*,” feeling the effects of sin in the world and our own flesh. Yet, we cling to God, holding fast to His promised grace and mercy. For this is a lifelong struggle we cannot overcome on our own, but only through the strength of the Holy Spirit, who keeps all Christians with Jesus Christ in the one true faith as He daily and richly forgives the sins of all believers.

Praise God that we are no longer spiritual deafmutes, but are the sons and daughters of God, the FATHER, and brothers and sisters of JESUS CHRIST, the FATHER’s SON. Thus, may we bless the LORD at all times. May His praise be continually in our mouths and on our lips. May our souls make their boast in the LORD!

So, let us now come to our Lord that He will touch our tongues, feeding us on the Living Bread which comes down from Heaven and hear Him say, “*Take eat, My body given for you; Take drink, My blood shed for you and the forgiveness of all your sins.*”

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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