

## The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 5, 517, 358, 473

The INTROIT

(Ps.70:1-2)

*P: Make haste, O God, to deliver me;*

**C: make haste to help me, O Lord.**

*P: Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul.*

**C: Let them be turned backward and put to confusion that desire my hurt.**

The COLLECT

Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it comes that Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life that we fail not finally to attain Thy heavenly promises; through Jesus Thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

**Isaiah 29:18-19**

And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase *their* joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

THE GRADUAL

(Ps.34:1-2;81:1)

*P: I will bless the Lord at all times:*

**C: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.**

*P: My soul shall make her boast in the Lord:*

**C: the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!**

*P: Sing aloud unto God, our Strength:*

**C: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Hallelujah!**

The EPISTLE

**2 Corinthians 3:4-11**

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.

*P: Hallelujah! O Lord, deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy and teach me Thy statutes. I am Thy servant, give me understanding:*

**C: that I may know Thy testimonies. Hallelujah!**

## The HOLY GOSPEL

**St. Mark 7:31-37**

And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, **Ephphatha**, that is, Be opened.

And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published *it*; And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

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## Mark 7:31-37 --- “Ephphatha: Be Opened”

### INTRODUCTION

I. AND THEY BESEECH HIM

II. EPHPHATHA: BE OPENED

III. AND BEYOND MEASURE THEY WERE ASTONISHED

### CONCLUSION

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Mark 7:31-37 --- “Ephphatha: Be Opened”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

The Gospel reading for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity is Mark 7:31-37:

**And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, *Ephphatha*, that is, Be opened.**

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In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### INTRODUCTION

Today’s Gospel text is one that makes me cry, both for joy and for sadness. Our text proclaims the never ending goodness and mercy of our the LORD our God. Yet it also proclaims the hardness of heart that causes us to fight against His goodness and mercy. In the hardness of our hearts we close our ears to the true meaning of the Gospel, twisting it and misapplying it to various matters in our lives. We close our ears so that we only hear part of what the LORD intends for us to hear so that when we open our mouths to pray and to worship, we have an impediment to our speech. In our text St. Mark proclaims to us the answer to our problems.

#### I. AND THEY BESEECH HIM

**And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.**

The Lord Jesus was on the move. He was urgently encroaching upon the devil’s territory to reclaim for the Kingdom of God those who had been enticed away. Jesus was traversing the many regions that had once been under the rule of David and Solomon. He was going to seek and to find the lost sheep of Israel. Throughout His ministry, in His body He carried the presence of Almighty God, for He was Himself, Immanuel. He was the Word Incarnate, the Word made flesh. Even without speaking, the Word of God was preached simply by His presence, for He is the very Word of God from eternity. Wherever Jesus went, Salvation came to the people, whether they received it or not. Jesus is the very Name of Salvation. There is no other name

under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). He was busy carrying salvation to all whom He would encounter and all who would receive Him as the Savior.

Jesus departed from the regions of the western seacoast, first passing through the regions of Decapolis. Decapolis, or the ten cities. This was a very populous region and many people came out to Him from this region. One man in particular was brought to Jesus, a man that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. Those who brought him brought him in order to beseech Jesus to put His hand upon the man. They wanted the man to be touched by Jesus, touched with healing and restoration.

This was a region that was notorious for the continual and rebellious idolatry of the people. The prophets of old prophesied against this region many times. The kinds of idolatry and wickedness that were practiced in this region were demonstrative of all that is wrong in the sinful world of humanity. Yet these people heard of Jesus and came out to receive healing from Him. They brought their friend to Jesus to be touched with the healing presence that is in His body. They came to draw near unto the Savior and to be healed by Him.

## II. EPHPHATHA: BE OPENED

**And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, *Ephphatha*, that is, Be opened.**

Do you hear what Jesus did? Do you hear the response of Jesus to the prayers of these people? His response has several parts, but what is the very first thing that Jesus does with this man? The very first thing that Jesus does is to separate this man from those who brought him to Jesus. The very first thing that Jesus does for this man is to set him apart from the false doctrine and practice of his friends and countrymen.

Is this what we observe with the preachers of our age? Is the first issue addressed the need for taking the sick and needy aside from the multitude? Is the first matter of urgency the matter of the calling of the Gospel to be set apart from all who would entice the person to seek things other than the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness?

Only after Jesus takes the man aside from the multitude does He then take action to touch the man with the healing that his friends besought of Jesus. Only after Jesus takes care of the most important sickness and problem in the man's life does Jesus deal with the matter of the physical deafness and impediment of speech.

And what was the first and most important problem for this man? His family and friends and other associations were this man's most important problem. Everything in this man's life was directing him to the concerns of the world and the flesh. Jesus took the man aside and then baptized the man with water from heaven, heavenly spit. With this water the Lord Jesus cleansed the man of his problems, yes, even the man's temporal and physical problems were washed away with this infinitesimal sprinkling of water.

But who observed and believed what Jesus did? Did anyone notice? Did anyone really notice?

This is why Mark records, **“And having looked up into the heaven He groaned and says to him: *Ephphatha*, that is, *dianoichthēti*.”**

*Ephphatha* is Hebrew, which is what Jesus spoke to Adam in the garden when He cause a mist to cover the earth and touched Adam to form him and then breathed into Adam the breath of life and instructed Him in the way of life for which He created Adam. *Dianoichthēti* is Greek, which is the language of the world at the time when Mark wrote this Gospel account, much like English is the language known and used in the world today. The literal meaning, which can also be translated, *be opened*, is actually “*be born*.” It carries the sense of the first born male opening the mother’s womb.

With this information in connection with the water with which Jesus touched the man, the implication should be clear. But who ever makes this connection, even though it is so openly manifested in what Mark records that Jesus does and says in connection with this man?

The actions of Jesus are even more amazing when we observe them in order. First Jesus takes the man aside from those to whom he had been listening. He took the man aside from all of the advice and wisdom that his family and friends had been giving to him. He took the man aside from all that he had previously known and trusted. Then Jesus plugs the man’s ears with His fingers. Even though this man is deaf and cannot hear with his ears, the significance is striking. Jesus plugs the man’s ears in order to enable the man to hear only the voice of Jesus through the means that Jesus is supplying. Then Jesus supplies water and touches the man’s tongue. Then Jesus looks up to the heaven and sighs or groans, and says to the man, “**Be born!** or “**Be opened!**” By means of water and the command of Jesus the man’s ears are made to hear again and the man’s impediment to his speech is entirely washed away.

But Jesus groaned to the Father and the Spirit, knowing that the hearts of the people were hardened to this rebirth through water and Spirit. He knew that the people would turn from the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit so that they would only pay attention to the temporal healing of the ears and tongue. Jesus sighed with grief in the communion of the Holy Trinity, knowing that even the disciples were hardened in their hearts so that they still did not understand the purpose for which the Son of the Living God was born into the world. And so we read in the next chapter that Jesus speaks this very warning and chastisement to the disciples, addressing the hardness of their hearts. The matter is so severe that after this chastisement, in the next encounter, Jesus condemns Peter as Satan and warns that we must each deny himself and take up his cross and follow Jesus in the way of the cross.

But who wants to hear this? No, surely Baptism cannot be the answer! What does Baptism require of a person? Baptism is an action that is done to a person by another. Baptism teaches that the salvation of God is not in any way dependent upon me and what I do. Who wants to hear this? Who wants to preach this?

Jesus does. The Holy Spirit does. The Father does. And so we continue to call upon the one name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the name given and placed upon us in Baptism, the name by which salvation is imparted to us, the name by which we are brought into God’s kingdom of grace, mercy, and peace. Yes, God continues to sigh and to call out to us saying to us, “**Be born!**”

### III. AND BEYOND MEASURE THEY WERE ASTONISHED

Amazingly, His Word does work for us in spite of our hard hearts! His Baptism does what He promises, even though we harden our hearts to His gracious Word and Promise!

**And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.**

We become distracted by all of the little things that we imagine to be important. We worry about our finances. We worry about our health. We worry about our family and friends. We worry and we worry. Then we cry out. We even pray that God would give us answers. But do we listen to what He has already told us? Do we hear what He has spoken continually and consistently even from the very first day? Do we hear Him calling us to be born again into the newness of His image in Christ? Do we hear Him calling us to the water's edge, to be crucified with Christ continually so as to be raised up with Christ in the newness of the resurrection?

Or do we cry out about how unfair our crosses are? Do we cry out to God in complaint against the little tests, complaining that they are too big for us to carry? Do we accuse God of unfaithfulness as though He does not know how to give us the strength to survive the temptations and trials of troubles of this world?

Is it any wonder that Jesus gave charge that they should tell no one about the little miracle that was performed? Jesus knew that they would focus upon the physical and ignore the spiritual. He knew that they would spread the news that a miracle worker was in their midst and that multitudes of people would throng to Him for all of the wrong reasons and that the blessed preaching of the Gospel would fall on the hard roadway and on the rocks and among the thorns.

Oh how we become distracted by our little troubles! Oh how we magnify our problems!

Why was the Son of God from eternity born of the Virgin? What did He preach continually as the reason for His birth into the world of men? Why did He say that He took into Himself our humanity, tabernacling in human flesh? He came to save the world from sin by taking the sin of the world into His own body and suffering the full extent of all of the wages of all sin for all time!

And we fools are astonished when God takes one of our little concerns! He has taken ALL of our concerns! He has taken all of our problems! He has taken all of our guilt and shame and disgrace! He has taken our condemnation! He has taken our sorrow and suffering! He has even taken our death!

Truly we should be astonished when through the hands of a man God comes to us and sprinkles us with water and says **“Be Born! Be opened.”** Yes, it is astonishing beyond measure that God comes to us and continually calls us to be opened to receive His forgiveness and life, having opened the womb of our holy mother, the virgin bride of Christ, to be born anew with the holiness and purity and everlasting blessedness of God's own children.

#### CONCLUSION

Ephphatha, be opened! Are these not marvelous words that are spoken in connection with the water of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit? Is this not cause for everlasting rejoicing and thanksgiving? Is this not cause to be glad to be called to suffer for a little while in the name of Jesus, giving witness to what He has done as we endure by His grace and even thrive according to His means of grace? What are our temporal sufferings and needs in this world

compared to what He has given us in our baptism and continues to pour out to us in His Supper? What are our weaknesses compared to the power of His Gospel? What are our struggles compared to the everlasting blessedness that He purchased for us with His own life, suffering, and death? Truly we should be filled with joy and astonishment that God provides not only for all of our little needs in this earthly existence, but that He also has provided for our hearts to be opened to receive His everlasting life and blessing so that our mouths also are opened to speak the glories of His grace, mercy, and peace. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.