

Trinity 12

I take as my text today from St Mark's Gospel:

And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable unto thee, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.

So often, when we consult commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, we find that they tend to focus a greater extent on the technical issues of passages, not that they don't also tackle the subtleties and explore the deeper meanings, and how they relate to us today.

Much of the commentary focus on this passage from Mark was placed on the geography. The question raised was would Jesus really head south by going north. That is, did Jesus really make the trip to Sidon, in the north, when his destination was Galilee in the south. It would have been out of the way if he were leaving Tyre to head north to Sidon, especially since there is no record of his ministering along the way, a long way to travel on foot.

There is speculation that Jesus needed this time with his disciples where they could be together without the crowds, and not be bothered by the Scribes and Pharisees. The journey is estimated to have taken no less than eight months, even though, as the crow flies the distance would have been more than 85 miles.

Considering the circuitous route they would have taken, the distance most likely would have been well over a hundred miles, probably the equivalent of walking from Aiken to Atlanta using our present day interstate, while the old routes, not the interstate would be much, much longer. Quite a trek!

Next, the commentaries turn to the man to be healed, discussing at length the type of deafness and the affected speech. Was he born deaf? Or did he become deaf later on in life? Thus, was his speech unintelligible from having never heard, or was his speech affected by his loss of hearing, and so on.

Then, the manner in which Jesus healed the man, presumably a Gentile.

First, Jesus took the man away from the crowd to avoid the appearance of ostentation, even the appearance of vain glory. This allowed the man to focus his whole attention on Jesus, and on what was being done to heal him. Some commentaries say this represented Jesus separating the saved sinner from his former, evil associations.

Then, Jesus put his fingers in the man's ears; he put spittle on the man's tongue.

Finally, Jesus looked to heaven, sighed, and exclaimed in Syriac, *Ethphatah*, meaning *be open*.

These actions represented the power of Jesus, by his very touch and by his very word — the power of Jesus to heal. Looking up to heaven, to his Heavenly Father, signifying that all help comes from God; in sighing, Jesus showed his concern for all of humanity; and with the word, *Ethphatah*, he intimated that sin shuts the ears against the word of God, and ties the tongue to render it incapable of giving praise to God; but by the Word, the ear is unstopped, and the man hears distinctly, and the tongue is unloosed, that he may just speak correctly, but rather speak plainly, praising God, as the grace of God enters his heart.

Jesus charged the multitude to tell no one, as he did not want to cause envy among the Scribes and Pharisees, nor did he want the common people to be inspired to set him up as a temporal king.

Pause for a moment. Here, we have been looking at this miracle of healing the deaf man who was dumb, a miracle reported only by Mark, strictly from the basic point of Biblical commentaries, the technical aspects of Biblical commentary.

Even though the commentaries do discuss the further spiritual implications, the focus so often is on technical commentary.

What we do see in this miracle that Mark has recorded is that Jesus uses the common place to teach the mysteries of God; he uses what is natural to demonstrate the power of God, the Love of God, the Grace of God.

What we see in this miracle is something remarkable, using a physical condition to illustrate our own spiritual condition.

In the world where Satan wields a mighty hand against us, stopping our ears so we cannot hear the word of God, the Good News of the Gospel; tying our tongues so that we cannot utter prayer and praise, or thanksgiving to God; there is the miracle of Jesus Christ as *Healer of Souls* to unstop our spiritual deafness, and loose our tongues, that we may both hear and speak of the wondrous works of God; that we may hear the resounding *Good News* of the Gospel; that we may sing praise and offer thanksgiving to God; and through prayer, begin a personal communication with our Heavenly Father.

The multitude was amazed at the healing of the deaf man, proclaiming that Jesus *hath done all things well*.

Indeed, our Lord and Saviour has done all things well, as proved by his **Death on the Cross**, healing the sinful nature of all mankind, unstopping our ears so we may hear his Holy Gospel, and take the *Good News* into our hearts, and loosing our tongues that we may spread the *Good News* abroad while we praise and glorify God.

Jesus has restored beauty and dignity to all of God's Creation, and above all he has given us hope, hope of an everlasting heavenly kingdom.

And he has given each of us something very special: a share in the power to promote healing, spiritual, even physical, through our relationship with him. This we accomplish through love and compassion, through sharing the gift of God's Grace in acts of kindness, through listening, and through the warmth and comfort we exude in his **Name**.

In a sense, we can be Christ's fingers in the ears of those who need to hear, who want to hear, and his spittle to loose the tongues of those who are desirous of praising and worshipping God but whose tongues are tied by not knowing how or when or where.

We can do that by not being afraid to share the Gospel but willing to follow the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; we can do that by inviting friends and neighbors, even strangers, to worship God in our small Parish.

And we can do it simply by sharing our faith in God through how we live our lives.

If each of us, in each parish, was to follow Christ's example with just one person in need of our comfort, whose ears are stopped and tongue tied, surely God would say that we, too, have done well.