

“The Finger of God”

Do you remember how God rescued the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt? He sent Moses to speak the word of the Lord to Pharaoh – and when Pharaoh refused to listen – the Lord sent various plagues upon the land of Egypt.

One of those plagues was the plague of gnats. It was the first plague that Pharaoh’s magicians could not duplicate – and do you remember what they said to Pharaoh about that plague? *“This is the finger of God.”* Amazing! With merely His finger, God controls all of creation.

So it is with Jesus in our hearing of His Gospel today. He takes a deaf-mute man aside – and God-in-the-flesh-Jesus puts His fingers into the man’s ears and puts his own spittle on the man’s tongue.

Then He looks up to heaven and with a deep sigh says to him – “Ephphatha!” (“Be opened!”). And immediately the man’s ears were opened – his imprisoned tongue was set free – and he began to speak rightly!

And not only him, but the crowds. Their tongues are loosed in orthodox praise. They rightly say, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

That same God-in-the-flesh Jesus is in the midst of you today – the finger of God planting His Word into your ears. And with Him comes a New Creation.

He alone has the power to reverse the curse of Eden’s Fall and its devastating effects upon creation. That’s what He is doing when He comes to the deaf-mute man. It’s just as Isaiah prophesied – “God will come with vengeance ... and the ears of the deaf [shall be] unstopped ... and the tongue of the mute [shall] sing for joy.”

And also with you. Jesus, the finger of God, comes to you – resurrecting your body and granting perfect healing that awaits the Last Day – but already in this life, today, He provides your greatest need – ears and mouth opened by Jesus, to receive His powerful, re-creating Word.

We poor, miserable sinners are deaf and mute – spiritually speaking. We are “slow to listen and quick to speak.” We listen to God’s Word, but don’t do what it says – and what good is that for our neighbor?

Do you hold God’s Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it – or do you despise the preaching of God’s Word? Without the hearing of God’s Word there is no contrition and repentance – there is no faith which receives the forgiveness that Jesus preaches into your ears.

But that’s not the end of it – for such deafness also hinders our speech. When our sinful ears are deaf to what God says to us – we are not able to speak in an orthodox (a right) way. Without right hearing – our speaking to God – and our speaking about others – is affected.

With respect to God, what we say to Him and about Him suffers when we do not, first of all, hear Him. When we no longer speak from what we hear, we make up our own noises and senseless speech – both when we worship Him – and when we tell others about Him and His truth.

When we refuse to hear God, then we are likely to curse, swear, lie, or deceive by His Name – rather than call upon it in every trouble in order to pray, praise, and give thanks. When our ears are plugged so that we do not hear God’s Word, then our tongues are bound to say unholy things about our neighbors.

The spiritually deaf do not protect the reputation of others – defending them, speaking well of them, explaining everything in the kindest way – rather, the tongue is used to tell lies about the neighbor, to betray him, slander him, and hurt his reputation.

In listening to the account of the deaf-mute, our initial response is to have pity on him – but then we realize that this is about us – that Jesus is dealing with us today. We are worse off than him – because our spiritual deafness affects us in both body AND soul! It not only threatens our earthly life – but our eternal well-being!

Our only hope is that God would have pity on us! And so, we come before Him today as beggars – who are deaf, mute, sinners by nature – and we cry out, “Lord, have mercy on us!”

Dearly beloved, the Lord is here to have mercy on you. He is the Great Physician who has done all things well! He is the Living Word of God – who entered the ear of the Virgin Mary, was implanted in her womb, and born – to be your Savior.

Jesus does not turn a deaf ear to those in need of His healing – and more importantly – He never turns a deaf ear to His Father. He perfectly hears His Father’s word, and lives it perfectly – even to the point of death on a cross. And all this He does “for you” – to rescue you from sin, death and the devil – to re-create you.

His faithful hearing leads to His faithful speaking. Your Savior, hanging from the cross, looks up to heaven again – and with an even deeper sigh – proclaims, “It is finished!” All your sin is paid for by His blood. Your death conquered by His death. “It IS finished” – God’s people have been set free!

O, that you would have ears to hear your crucified and risen Savior who serves you today. Having baptized you, His Spirit-filled-Word has entered your ears and set them free to hear and believe the Gospel.

Today, He speaks to you – “Ephphatha” – “be opened” – not only your ears, but your hearts – to believe and receive the forgiveness He preaches. He touches your tongue with His healing body and His holy blood – loosening your tongue to say your “Amen” to all He has promised – to speak words of peace and forgiveness to others.

With opened ears, and tongues touched – you offer right and orthodox praise – saying, “He has done all things well.” Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.