

"He Can Make You Hear" Mark 7:31-37 Trinity 12 2024

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Gospel of Mark, at this point, seems to be a collection of events in the ministry of Jesus. The events are not necessarily chronological. They are just individual snippets of the teachings and works of Jesus. They are reported here the way they are, and in the order they appear, for theological purposes. This is not so much a "life of Jesus" kind of Gospel, but a "message of Jesus" book. The miracles are described to teach, about the authority and the will and the raw power of Jesus. In other words, Jesus did the miracles to show us something. In our Gospel this morning, Jesus was exercising authority over the troubles of life, which is to say, over the consequences of sin. In doing so, He blessed the deaf man, and He showed us something - in the words of our theme, this morning, he showed us that He can make you hear.

Jesus came as the Savior from sin, so it suited His purposes to demonstrate that He actually had power over sin and its effects. They brought a man to Jesus who could not hear and was unable to speak clearly. The people asked Jesus to lay hands on Him, clearly looking for a miraculous healing. Jesus took the man aside, which makes it clear that this was not done as some sort of side-show act to attract attention and praise. This was done out of compassion for the man.

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Jesus healed the man of His deafness and set His tongue free to speak. He accomplished all that He did by His Word. He spoke, and the man was healed. Sticking His fingers in the man's ears and touching his tongue were for the sake of the afflicted man. Jesus spit to illustrate getting rid of the impediment to clear speech. Jesus simply communicated His intentions by pantomime for a man who could not yet hear.

This miracle of healing was done at least in part as an illustration. Jesus was after something more than simply changing the life of one deaf man. He surely intended to do that too, but His primary purpose was to show us something. This miracle was meant to be a sign.

Apparently it worked. Mark says that the crowds were "utterly astonished". The Greek says that they were 'astonished' or 'amazed' "beyond measure." That is the response of sinful men in the presence of the divine. They were really impressed and even a bit frightened. What frightened them was that they were seeing One that they had assumed was a mere man do works which only God can do. Standing in the presence of God at work is a terrifying thing for sinful men and women. The only reason that they were not frightened out of their wits was that He was doing good and friendly sorts of things. They were standing in the presence of God as He overcame the symptoms of

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sin in this man - as He healed Him. Can you imagine what that would have been like? Wouldn't you like to be able to witness that?

Well, you can. Jesus is still performing that particular miracle. He still makes men hear. He is fulfilling the promise of Isaiah in the Old Testament lesson appointed for today; "And on that day the deaf shall hear words of a book." That's Isaiah 29:18. The prophecy says that He will make men hear – and He does. The Word of God opens our ears and our understanding and creates faith in us. We say the same thing in our Catechism, in the meaning of the Third Article of the Apostles Creed, "the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts . . ." He also makes us able to speak - to sing and speak the praises of Him who died for us, as Paul writes, "No man can say Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

You see, we are the deaf man in the story. Oh, not physically. Jesus healed that man in a specific time and place in history. Still, we are to understand that we are by nature like him, deaf and in need of Jesus to heal us by the Word of God. And He can make you hear! We do not understand or believe God's Word by our natural abilities. We are naturally incapable of doing so until and unless God works on us and in us with His Word – just like the deaf man in our Gospel.

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Jesus makes us hear. He comes to us, who are deaf by nature, and with His Word He reaches in and changes us, transforming us from the deaf to the hearing and from the dead into the living, and from enemies of God into His own beloved children. Because of Jesus and His death on the cross, we have been forgiven, and that which was our death has been taken away, and our deafness to the things of God has been transformed into life and hearing and joy for those who believe. Better yet, we have been given the key – we have the power to do the same thing for others.

You see, just like Jesus did for the man in the Gospel lesson, He makes us able to speak, too. He has touched our tongues by His Word and given us His Word to speak to others that they, too, might believe. He has given us the Word of His saving love and promises and has charged us with the mission of sharing it with everyone else. Notice how the witnesses to the healing could not keep from talking about it. Jesus sternly commanded them not to go about talking about it, but they couldn't help themselves. If you believe this Gospel is true, and true for you, could you keep such a thing silent and to yourself? They say that religion is one of those things you should not talk about in public. Well, they do not know Jesus and they do not know forgiveness and they obviously do not possess the peace which passes all

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understanding if they can keep silent about the one thing really worth talking about - and, if you can keep quiet about it, neither do you.

Jesus makes us, who were deaf to His grace hear through the Word of God. The miracle of changing us from unbelievers and enemies of God into believers and loving children of the heavenly Father is what our Gospel lesson points our minds to - He can make you hear! He has, that is why you believe. And He gives us a part in that miracle for others. All there is for us to do is speak of His love and grace. He does the rest.

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