

August 22, 2010
Trinity 12
Mark 7:31-37
“You are Clean”

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

The deaf-mute’s friends brought him to Jesus. They didn’t just change the categorization and pretend that took care of it. **“You’re not deaf, you’re hearing-challenged.”** They didn’t tell him God wanted him that way and that he should get used to it, it was what made him special.

They did not ignore his deafness or exclude him. They didn’t say it was his fault, that it was punishment for something he had done, or for something he had done in a past life, or that he had brought it upon himself. They were his friends.

They were his friends. So they brought him to where he could get help. They brought Him to Jesus. May God grant to us all such friends. And by His mercy may He make such friends to others. At their prayers, they begged Jesus to lay His hands on him, He took the man at aside.

It was just the two of them, Jesus and the deaf-mute. Then He put His fingers into the deaf man’s ears. He spat and touched the deaf man’s tongue. There was something borderline inappropriate in His actions. We don’t want people sticking their fingers in our ears. And we certainly don’t want people spitting and touching our tongues! Jesus invaded this man’s space. He touched his pain. It was intimacy that could not be denied.

The Lord can heal with just a Word. *Why then fingers in the ears? Spit and hands upon the tongue?* It was intimate. It was invasive. It was dominating.

Whether Our Lord heals with just a word or He does it by sticking His fingers in the ears, spitting, and touching the tongue,

the only way that ears are opened and tongues are loosed is by intimate, invasive, domination by God.

Scrubbing is always near violence. That is why dogs and small children don't like baths.

Here is the problem: *Your feet stink. Your tongue is out of control, it reveals an evil heart. It lies. It gossips. It betrays friends. Your hands are dirty. They have touched unclean things, been party to vile actions. Your eyes leak puss and blood. You have pointed them to evil and not turned away. You are contagious. You are dying and your actions, your deceit, your selfishness, are a threat to your family and nation, to your children and your friends. Repent.*

Jesus steps in. He takes you apart, to Himself. He touches you. He prods your hurting parts. He pours on water, oil and wine. He speaks His Name. He does not speak your name. Your name is no good, broken, corrupt, infected. He speaks His Name. His Name is good. He opens ears and tongue and eyes with His Word. Then -- most shocking, most unexpected - He exchanges His bodily fluids, His spittle and His blood, for yours. He takes your sickness, your corruption. He gives you health. It is a transfusion of grace, a washing of rebirth and renewal, a resurrection from the dead.

At the hand of Jesus Christ the deaf man heard the Word of God and praised God's Name. Jesus broke the chains of death. He stopped the cycle. He stood in the gap, made up the difference, restored His good creation to its intended goodness. He accepted the infection, corruption, dirt, shame. So, He answer the prayers of the friends and fulfill the will of His Father. That is who Jesus is. It is what He does, why He came. Peace is bestowed by the forgiveness won on the cross. It is peace with the Father in the bond of the Spirit through the intercession of the Son. It passes all understanding. It is given to sinners. But given to us, it is not ours to manipulate or manufacture. It is ours to enjoy, to benefit from, not as the King so that we hold it by Divine Right, but as the members of the King's family, who abide by His command and

grace, at His pleasure. So also unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ, it can only be created by God. It is given where His Word reigns and men submit to it together. It will only be fully realized when we are taken from this valley of confusion. It will only be fully realized when our holiness is fully realized. But until then we dare not make a mockery of it now by pretending nothing matters, that we can create unity where God seems to have failed, that we can sin because we are forgiven, that if we change the classification or deny the reality and danger then everything will be okay.

Faith is the ultimate gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the conviction that the Holy Trinity is good, has worked out our salvation for us for free, and will at the end bring us to everlasting consolation and bliss. This gift is given by God to those who are baptized, to those who hear His Word and believe it, to those who eat His Body and drink His Blood, proclaiming His death until He comes again. He invades them, coming into them by ear and tongue, to save them. That invasion is indistinguishable from faith. To say faith saves is to say: Jesus saves. To have faith is to have forgiveness and unity in Jesus Christ.

Now when Jesus invades your personal space, when He sticks His finger into your ear, it comes away dirty. Who knows what gross thing is on the end of it for all the world to see. It is embarrassing, uncomfortable, a little weird. But when that gunk has been removed and He is revealed according to His mercy, when His loving purpose is known, you won't care. *So what if the devil laughed at you? The world thought you strange? So what if you suffered fiery trials for a while?* You hear the Shepherd's Voice. He says: **“Do not be afraid. I died for you. I love you. I forgive you. Rise from the dead. Be my Bride.”**

And that is worth it. Every time. Shame is removed along with sin. You are free to hear His Word, to sing His praise, to be one with Him in intimate communion, His beloved, emancipated from the lies of the devil, freed of what blocked your ears and ruined your tongue and threatened your peace. Cleansed of your diseases and weakness.

And you have friends here on earth in Jesus Christ, who, by His grace, pray for you. And you have even more friends in heaven, in Jesus Christ, who, by His grace, pray for you.

Open your ears and hear the Word of Christ. Stick out your tongue. Have Christ placed upon it. Be opened. In Jesus' ✠ Name. Amen.