

Trinity XII, 2006
Text: Mark 7:31-37
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✠Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ ✠

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

What good are ears if they refuse to hear the Word of God? What good is a tongue if it is used for gossip, or lashing out unreasonably at wife and children, or as a sharp sword to cut down your co-workers or girlfriends? Indeed, did not our Lord say that if your eye causes you to sin it would be better to pluck it out and enter heaven maimed than to entire whole into hell? So what good are your ears if you fill them with bawdy tales and dirty jokes? What good is your tongue so often soiled by the cruel language that flows forth from your heart?

Repent. Cut out your sinful tongue and with the same knife pierce your corrupt ear drums. Turn away from corruption and come to Jesus as this deaf and dumb man comes – with nothing to offer, nothing to give. Come to him all you who have a tongue worn out and lame from foul talking – and he shall touch your tongue and renew you. Come to him all you who are weary of hearing only tales of woe and grief and lust, and Jesus shall force his fingers into your ears and recreate them to hear only the Good News of the forgiveness of your sins.

This is what you should learn from this deaf and mute man in our Gospel lesson for today. A miracle of Jesus is never an end in itself – otherwise they would be just parlor tricks. Rather, a miracle of Jesus is a prophecy pointing to an even higher truth. So here Jesus heals a deaf and mute man that you might know two things. First, that He is the Lord of creation who will make all things new, heal all diseases and defects in the coming resurrection. And second, Jesus heals this deaf and mute man that you might know that Jesus is the one who has come to forgive sins and remake your soul as well.

The two go together: body and soul. They are intimately connected. When God made man he formed Adam from the dust of the ground and then breathed into him and the man became a living thing: soul and body together. When humankind chose sin over God, both body and soul fell. Both together have become corrupt. So bodily disease and death are connected to the corruption of

human souls – the wickedness and self-centeredness that lurks in human hearts.

Too often we wish to divide body and soul – to talk about our bodies as the problems and our souls as the good part of us. But this is not correct – the two go together. Indeed, to separate body and soul is the very definition of death! So let the weakness of your body, every disease and hardship, every broken arm and new wrinkle on your face, let all that brokenness be for you a reminder of and a call to repentance from the brokenness of your soul. For body and soul go together. The wages of sin is death and all that follows with death: bodily disease and corruption.

And so consider this deaf and mute man again. He is wounded and diseased in his body; and body and soul go together. His deepest problem is not that he is deaf and dumb, but that he is a sinner. The deafness and dumbness are just signs and results of that deeper corruption that infects all of humanity. And likewise when Jesus heals the man's body with his touch and saliva – this is the sign and the method by which Jesus heals the man's soul. For body and soul go together, in healing the one, Jesus heals the other.

For we have an incarnated faith – that word incarnation, as in the Incarnation of our Lord, means en-flesh-ment. Our Lord became flesh for us, became human for us. And in this incarnation is our salvation. God himself has stepped into human existence and human flesh that he might save all of humanity – not only in soul but in body as well. For our salvation comes to us through the body of the Lord: for without his body, the Lord could not have died for you. But he did die for you. The nails pierced real hands and feet of flesh and the crown of thorns drove deep into real brow as real blood flowed down his face so that you might be forgiven. And finally, mystery of mysteries, the Lord Jesus himself suffered the full wages of sin in his body and soul as he died on that cross. Thus, once for all, the righteous one died for the unrighteous, he who had no sin was made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. But death could not keep the Lord of Life down – so on that third day he rose again in his body. He appeared to his disciples in his body. He bid Thomas to put his hands in the mark of the nails and spear-wound – to touch his body, as proof that he was alive again.

For the two go together: body and soul. The Lord's Body is your salvation. His touch heals. And so the Lord has washed your body in Baptism – but since body and soul go together, Scripture calls this baptism a new spiritual birth, the washing of rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit. Since God deals with bodies and souls, his spiritual actions are also physical actions. He opens your ears to forgive your soul by sending out his messengers to put his Word of Absolution right into those ears.

And most glorious of all – just like this deaf and mute man in our Gospel lesson, the Lord brings you into contact with his own touch, his own body, right on your tongue. For it is not enough for the Lord to be far off – he is a God who is up

close. And it is not enough for God the Son to be an omnipotent spirit – for ever since the incarnation, ever since God the Son took up flesh in the Virgin's womb, there is no God the Son that can be separated from his body. And so now he holds nothing back from you, he sends to you his Body and Blood and touches your tongue with his salvation and pours life down your throat. Indeed, the communion you have with your Lord at this table far exceeds what the man in our Gospel lesson experienced – for Jesus is not just touching your tongue with his finger, but filling you with his wholeness by coming to you in his body and blood.

So rejoice! He who has ears, let him hear. He with a mouth, let him receive. Your ears are unstopped now and they are filled with the Good News of your salvation in Christ. Your tongue is now loosed to proclaim Hosanna to Him Who cometh in the Name of the Lord, the One Who comes to you in his Body and Blood to fill you with forgiveness, life, and salvation. Amen.

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

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Now the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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