

Sermon for Trinity 12 – Mark 7:31-37

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

“He has done all things well.” These words were spoken of Jesus in today’s Gospel, right after He had opened the ears of a deaf man. But we desire to hear these words spoken about us as well. “He or she has done all things well.” It’s our wishful beaming report card coming from our teacher to our parents. It’s the desired outcome for our work evaluation coming from the big boss. It’s even the main theme we want for our eventual obituary: “He has done all things well.”

But the problem is we haven’t done all things well. In fact, even if we’ve done half of them well, half is a long way from “all.” We can put up the façade at school, at work, or in our social group, but that’s only part, even if we’ve done those roles “well.” For all of us, we’re not just a spouse, worker, student, parent, son, or daughter. We’re in multiple vocations. “Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?” We NEED God’s forgiveness in all aspects of our life.

Before Jesus healed the blind man in Luke 18, He asked him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” He asked this to the blind man, but He also asks us. “What do you want Me to do for you?” If we don’t know how to answer or if we desire nothing from Him, we have heard the Gospel with deaf ears. Christ comes to us today that we may trust Him and receive His forgiveness. If this doesn’t happen, than it’s in vain that we hear about our Lord Jesus and what He does. The point? We too need Jesus’ miracles. So what is the significance of His miracles for us?

Through Jesus’ miracles we get to know Him just as He is. In them, divine power and merciful compassion meet us. When we see Him presented in the Gospels, as in the miracle of healing the deaf-mute man, He always has the same chief goal: to help those in need. The people realized this back at that time: “He has done all things well.” Nothing is too difficult for Him. Whatever the cause of trouble, whether it’s sickness or death, storm or famine – He is equally powerful. There’s nothing He can’t overcome with abundance: no lack of wine, no lack of bread, no empty nets, no broken relationships, or future uncertainty, no sick child or servant, not even dead ones are too much for Him to raise. All these miracles reveal His divine power and mercy for you. That’s right – FOR YOU. Why? Because nothing would be gained by having physical hunger ended, if eternal hunger should follow. Nothing would be gained if leprosy was cleansed while our souls remained unclean with sins. Yes, it would be little use if the physically dead were made alive while our spiritual death remained. Every miracle, and especially the healing of the deaf man, is aimed at Jesus’ salvation for you. “Blessed are the eyes which see what you see, and the ears which hear what you hear!”

Do we have such open ears? If we're honest, how deaf and dull are we?!? How often do we hear but not really hear? Gossip magnified and paraded around as "news," this we want to hear, especially when we can use it to put others down and build ourselves up. But Good News that concerns our eternal life – the Word about salvation and the forgiveness of sins, that we should give a thousand worlds and their wealth to hear, how much do we want to hear God's Word? If not at all, we'd be better off deaf!

Where a person doesn't hear, their tongue is also silent. How little thanksgiving is heard for the countless blessings we receive? How little confession of our sins and of our Savior is there also? Instead of confessing Jesus before men, we're often ashamed of Him! Is Christ known among us when we take such a stance? How can we get opened ears and a loosed tongue?

We must never forget Him whose ears remained ever deaf to the devil and this world's cunning lies. He would not hear of a way out other than Golgotha's cross. His tongue remained mute when slanderers rose against Him. He would not revile in return. "Like a sheep He was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearers is silent, so He opens not His mouth." He would not keep His cheeks from spit and slaps. He would not keep His Hands and feet from nails. He would not keep His head from thorns, or His side from the spear. Christ gained salvation by His suffering and death, and He gives it to us. That's why we recognize Christ crucified as the living Savior, as our living Savior.

And nothing is too irrelevant, nothing is too unimportant to Him. You can have Him with you in everything and trust Him. Your sadness and tears, whatever they come from, your house and home, your vocation, He knows it all. He has compassion on you; that's why you can confidently entrust yourself to Him. We say with St. Paul, "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

We aren't able to help ourselves. We must acknowledge our need! Even so, Christ doesn't wait for us to come to Him, but He loves us and comes to us. "Ephphatha!" He says to you. "Be opened," He says. He causes you to hear clearly. Come to him with all your concerns and leave them to Him. Rely on Him. Say confidently: "Speak, O God, and I will hear Thee;/Let Thy will be done indeed./May I undisturbed draw near Thee/While Thou dost Thy people feed./Here of life the fountain flows;/Here is balm for all our woes." Yes, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak." Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠