

Ben Libby

Sermon

September 12th, 16th Sunday after Pentecost

To the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the One who is, who was, and is to come, to Him be glory forever amen. (Rev 1:8 NKJ)

Our sermon text for this Sunday is taken from Mark, chapter 7, beginning with verse 31:

Jesus left the region of Tyre again and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of the Decapolis. 32 They brought a man to him who was deaf and had a speech impediment. They pleaded with Jesus to place his hand on him. 33 Jesus took him aside in private, away from the crowd. He put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. 34 After he looked up to heaven, he sighed and said, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!") 35 Immediately the man's ears were opened, his tongue was set free, and he began to speak plainly. 36 Jesus gave the people strict orders to tell no one, but the more he did so, the more they kept proclaiming it. 37 They were amazed beyond measure and said, "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!"

This is the Word of the LORD!!!

Mercy, Grace, and peace are yours through your God and Father, and through His Son, Jesus Christ, true God and Man, dear fellow Sons and Daughters of the King...

Which of your five senses would be the worst to lose? You might say, "Pastor, this is a very strange hypothetical question." And you would be right. But I think it is good to evaluate and remind ourselves what our God has given us, including our most basic senses.

Smell would probably be easiest sense to go without, and in some instances would actually be a blessing. Loosing touch would be hard, but there aren't many afflictions that would leave you void of all sensations of touch. I think it's a tie between being blind, deaf, or mute. For me, it would be very hard to be a pastor while being mute. But it would be probably just as challenging to not be able to see or be able to hear.

In our text before us this morning, we have Jesus healing a man who was both unable to hear and had difficulty speaking. Whenever you have a miracle of any kind in the Bible, there is always a lesson with it. The take aways are always the same. #1 The LORD can do anything. #2 There is no illness or disease that the LORD cannot cure. And #3, as amazing as

the miracle might be, it points ahead to another miracle and another healing. God's miracles point to the miraculous fact that our souls have been healed in the blood of Christ.

Jesus is the great physician. There is no illness that He cannot cure. But, in the long run, physical healing is treating the symptom, not the real disease. Every kind of physical healing is a band-aid, a temporary fix that will not delay the inevitable. But this is why Jesus is THE great physician. He not only treats the symptom, but He also always treats the actual disease. Our great physician uses some "unusual" methods, methods that the medical industry would scoff at. But He does so for a reason. He treats unusual patients, He has unusual prognoses, and there is an unusual payment. We pray: LORD, SANTICIFY US BY YOUR TRUTH, YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, AMEN!

Jesus left the region of Tyre again and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of the Decapolis. 32 They brought a man to him who was deaf and had a speech

impediment. They pleaded with Jesus to place his hand on him.

We know very little about this trip that Jesus took. It might have been the longest trip He ever traveled. It is theorized that it was over 100 miles. And yet nothing is recorded about it. He returns from the north, and then travels down to the area known as the Decapolis, which were a region made up of 10 cities on the east side of the Jordan river. When Jesus was in the area on the other side of the river previously, He had healed many people. His fame preceded Him here, and that's why this unnamed man was brought to Jesus.

Have you ever heard of Helen Keller? She is quite famous because of her disabilities. She lost her hearing and sight when she was 19 months old. She was never cured of these disabilities, but she is famous because her teacher, Anne Sullivan, taught her how to read and write. How do you teach someone who cannot see or hear how to read and write? Well, that's exactly what Sullivan did through various groundbreaking methods. Keller went on to be a prolific writer and disability rights advocate.

This man was unusual. He also did not have 2 of his senses, but one was due to the other. After all, if you cannot hear, how can you learn to speak? The people who brought him to Jesus no doubt had heard that Jesus simply put hands on people and they left healed. But the man himself heard no such thing, because he couldn't hear anything. His friends request that Jesus put his hands on him and heal him. Jesus did that, but certainly not in the way they had probably expected.

This man could not hear and couldn't speak much if at all. He was in desperate need of healing. He really reminds me of someone else that I have known personally. Some one in fact who I love quite dearly...MYSELF!!! This man's physical conditions really reflect mankind's spiritual conditions. Our ears don't work like they should. They perk up when it comes to juicy gossip or inappropriate jokes. Yet,

when the Word is preached to them, they just can't seem to open all the way. Sure, we can speak when we have to. But when it comes to speaking about Christ and what He has done for us, how often does it seem that in that critical hour we also have a "speech impediment"?

No, we aren't all that unusual, are we? In fact, we're pretty basic when it comes to our sin problem. Helen Keller and her teacher Anne Sullivan are remembered because of how disabled she was and because of what she accomplished despite those disabilities. Our sin has severely crippled us, and there is no over coming it. Nowadays, there is sign language and breakthroughs in hearing devices that allow people like this man to function and have a normal life. But there was nothing we could ever do to fix our problem. There is no normal life, just death. Left to our own devices, we would surely be doomed. We are all unusual patients because of just how crippled we are by our sin. But when it comes to humans, sadly that's not unusual, it's typical.

33 Jesus took him aside in private, away from the crowd. He put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. 34 After he looked up to heaven, he sighed and said, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!")

Jesus did not do many things that were expected. In fact, many times the way He did things are said things really amazed people. It was so different from what they were used to. Jesus the man was a paradox to the people. He was, the long-awaited Messiah. Yet when He finally came, the people rejected Him because He wasn't what they had expected.

Take this healing for instance. If something like this happened today, a video of it would break the internet. How many shares, likes, and retweets would the healing of this man get? But Jesus doesn't heal the man in front of the whole crowd. He doesn't call him up to the front of the church so the whole

assembly can witness what kind of power and authority He has. Rather, Jesus takes the man aside privately. He doesn't simply lay hands on him and heal him, like the people who brought him there had requested. Rather, Jesus gets extremely hands on here.

Jesus takes His fingers and puts them in the ears that had not heard. It's not exactly clear what the process was next. I assumed that Jesus spit on His own hands and touched the man's tongue. Doesn't that fact kind of makes you uneasy? Doesn't it seem messy and unsanitary? But, who are we to question the methods of the GREAT PHYSICIAN! That really is our problem. We want something, and we want it in the way that we want it.

We are like the Old Testament leper, Naaman. When he heard that there was possibly a cure for his leprosy, he traveled a great distance to see the prophet, Elisha. And what was Elisha's recommended treatment? **"Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean." (2Ki 5:10 NKJ)** Naaman became furious at this diagnosis! **He said, "Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.' 12 "Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" (2Ki 5:11-12 NKJ)** Eventually, he was talked down by one of his servants, did what was commanded, and lo and behold, he was healed.

Jesus used some unusual methods. But just like with Elisha and Naaman, it's not about the method. It's about the power of the LORD. Jesus is God made flesh. The very same God that said "let there be light" and light was created out of literally nothing. What really was it for that same being to say, **"Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!")**

The same is true to this very day when it comes to Christ's followers, when it comes to us. It is not about the method! Yes, there are perhaps better ways of explaining certain things to certain people. You would probably approach a former Catholic differently than you would a former Southern Baptist. There are different ways to speak the Word to people. That is what Jesus is doing here, He is healing this man in a way that was unique to who he was. The man could see and feel everything that Jesus did. But it was not the fact that Jesus put His fingers into his ears, or spit and touched his tongue that healed the man. It was the Word spoken by the Word that restored this man!

35 Immediately the man's ears were opened, his tongue was set free, and he began to speak plainly. 36 Jesus gave the people strict orders to tell no one, but the more he did so, the more they kept proclaiming it.

This would happen a lot in the ministry of Christ. He would do something incredible, a miracle, and instead of telling people to share what happened, usually He told people not to tell others about it. Why would He do that? This has made many skeptics come up with all kinds of theories. Some take this motivate and try to deny His deity because of it. Which makes all kinds of sense. The Man who just did the impossible told people not to talk about what He did because He wasn't what they just saw He was...

We don't always know the reason why Christ commanded silence. I think it would depend on the region and the people who lived there. There were several reasons. He didn't want the physical effects of the Word He spoke to seem more important than the spiritual effects His Word brought about. This man was healed. But he still died. Jesus did not come just to heal the sick. He came to heal everyone. He came to die for the sins of the world.

That is the unusual payment that is required by the great physician. Say for instance, that the unthinkable happened to you. You get cancer. It's actually not that unthinkable, we all know someone who has dealt with cancer in some way, shape, or form. Say you get cancer. You battle the disease for years. The outlook doesn't look good. You fight and fight, but the doctors say your days are numbered. But then a new doctor comes along, with a radical new way to treat you. And...it works! You become cancer free. What would your reaction towards that doctor be? Wouldn't you be thankful? Wouldn't you be effusive in praising and thanking that doctor? But, after all the healing and all the thanking, what would remain? A huge stack of bills! It costs a lot of money to fight cancer, especially a radical new treatment.

The healing that Jesus has given us is free, but it is still expensive. Most doctors who heal your terminal illness charge great fees. Jesus, the great physician, does the opposite. He heals you, and then instead of charging you, pays you! He has healed us, and not only that, but He has also given to us His eternal righteousness. He transfers the sin that would kill us, takes it upon Himself, and pays for it with his own blood. We in turn get His righteousness and His heavenly inheritance! **For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2Co 5:21 NKJ)**

37 They were amazed beyond measure and said, "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!"