

SERMON FOR SEPTEMBER 5, 2021

TEXT: MARK 7: 31-37

THEME: A HAND'S ON SAVIOR

Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. **32** And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. **33** And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. **34** And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." **35** And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. **36** And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. **37** And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

In the name of Jesus:

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

All Greta Garbo wanted was to be alone. That was her mantra, it is what she lived for, to be all alone. But that mantra jinxed her search for solitude. Even though many out of work actors and actresses attempted to stay in the limelight, Garbo insisted that she be left all alone. And her insistence motivated paparazzi and others to get a picture or an audience with her. To get a picture of Greta Garbo was the holy grail that many sought until the day she died.

But you don't want to be alone, now, do you? Neither do I. But we are more alone today than we have ever been. Human beings have always lived in communities and families, for protection and for companionship. But in the 21st century, there is more loneliness than ever.

The current pandemic has only added to our loneliness. In the past year we have worn masks, adhered to social distancing standards, worked from home, participated in remote learning, all in an effort to stay alive. And in doing so, our loneliness has increased.

We need to know that Someone cares. We have been created to be social people. When God created man He said, "It is not good for man to be alone." God knows our loneliness.

That is why the Gospel lesson is so comforting for us today. The Gospel writer Mark tells us that Jesus is traveling from the region of Tyre and Sidon down to the area of the Decapolis or Ten cities. Jesus, the long promised Messiah from the lineage of the Jewish King David, isn't traveling and visiting with the Jewish people, He is out and about among the Gentiles, the people the Jews considered unclean and not worthy to be called God's people. Jesus is traveling and visiting the outcasts, those who were considered by many to be good as left alone.

As Jesus entered the Decapolis, a man who was deaf and who had a speech impediment was brought to Him by the man's family and friends. This man with his hearing loss and inability to speak was as if he was a man all alone on an island. When others spoke with him he could not hear them, and in his attempts to communicate with them they could not understand him. Loneliness, anger, and frustration welled up inside of him. No one could listen to him, no one could understand.

You have felt that way, haven't you. There have been times that you have cried out to God asking Him to answer your prayer, and there is seemingly no response. Is God hearing my plea? Does He know what I am facing? Can't He see that I am in pain? Where is God when I feel so all alone.

What we see in the Gospel of Mark is that our God is a hands on God. A God who gets His hands dirty. The Lord God who created the heavens and the earth bent down from heaven and got His hands dirty, forming Adam from the dirt and clay of the earth. Then the Lord breathed into man and he became a living being.

The same Lord who made man from the dirt and who said that it is not good for man to be alone, came down from heaven to be a human being like each and everyone of us. He came down from heaven because He saw that

man was separated from God because of sin. Man lived in loneliness and isolation from the Creator, unwilling to listen or speak to Him.

And so Jesus, seeing our sinful state and this man in our text living in isolation, sighed. He sighed a sigh of sadness, at the brokenness of the world and the people of the world. He sighed and once again got His hands dirty. Placing His hands in the man's ears, and then spitting and placing His hands on the man's tongue, to clearly tell the man something unique and special was about to happen, Jesus told the closed ears and mouth to open up! And God's powerful Word, as it always does, works miracles. The man could hear, He could clearly speak. And He couldn't stop telling others what Jesus had done for him.

Several months later Jesus got His hands dirty, carrying a cross to a hill called Calvary. There He stretched out His hands and those hands became bloody, as soldiers pounded nails into His hands, and then His feet. Lifted up upon that cross, Jesus took on your sins and mine. He who knew no sin actually became sin for sinners. Jesus' cry of forsakenness and loneliness from the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" shows that Jesus knows your loneliness and pain, He has experienced unanswered prayer and still He trusts His Father. Why? Because God loves you. He loved you enough to send His Son Jesus to suffer as you suffer, to experience the loneliness that

you know, and to taste death that we will all at one time or another will taste. His final sigh from the cross, when He gave up His spirit, shows that Jesus truly understands and knows what you are going through. All so that you can know that God really cares, that He really loves you, and that He will be there for you now and in the future. Jesus said to this man in our text, "I know your suffering, and I have come to help you." And then Jesus spoke, and by His Word the man was healed.

Jesus speaks His Word to you and me today. And by His Word, we are forgiven. By His Word, we are His children. By His Word, our lives have been changed, so that by people of the Word we take God's Word into our lives and show others our faith in Christ and His Word.

James in the Epistle lesson for today tells us that faith without works is dead. Faith in Jesus is always a living faith, an active faith, a faith that not only takes Jesus at His Word by taking Jesus' Word of salvation, hope and healing to others.

We live in a challenging world. It is a world where it is becoming harder and harder to speak about our faith. People today are not inclined to listen to us. They don't want to hear the message about Jesus. Some think that our faith is a fantasy. Others will even call our message about Jesus hate speech. It is difficult for us to get others to hear us, even to give us a chance at hearing

what we have to say about Jesus. And so we remain silent and afraid, not willing to speak up, because of our fear of another's response.

But we can still touch others with the love of Jesus. Like Jesus, we can show compassion to others to show that we know that they are in pain. We can be friends with people whose loneliness keeps them up at night. We can share from our plenty with those who struggle to get by and make ends meet. We in our compassion for others can show that yes, we know that we live in a broken world, but in our actions we can show that we not only know this but that we also care. Even without speaking we can be God's sign language of love to others. For Jesus reaches out to us, and through us to others, to touch with His love. For when the world will not listen, we can put God's love into action, knowing that Christ's love will be received and that He will work through His Word to give life to others.

In the name of the Father, Son + and Holy Spirit. Amen