**Mark 7:31-37 (ESV)**

**31**  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.”

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Those outside the nation Israel were always more open to the good news of salvation. St. Mark made this fact especially known to Christians living in a purely Gentile world. Just like Israel, the glory of Rome was not going to be the center of attention for the Gospel. All the excitement and pageantry only served to sweep the mess of society under the rug. Underneath the governance of men were those suffering from all kinds of damage caused by sin, death, and the Devil. The Church’s work lay with speaking Christ into that silence. It was to those cut off from the life cheered on by the rest.

We also had much attention last week with all the hype over the political conventions. The lines for battle were drawn. Nominees for president gave their speeches. Policies promoted with pomp and circumstance promising to fix the problems. This is all fine and good in a democratic society. However, our account today with Jesus healing a deaf man makes us address what it means to be in a world of silence. In other words, it goes beyond what men speak about in terms of governance and glory. This is the silence fallen upon all of humanity. Where sin, death, and the devil cause suffering to the depths of the soul. In a world of such silence, Jesus brings the sound of salvation and life.

*The center of attention in our text is around that word “Ephphatha” or “be opened.” This word holds more value than in making a deaf man be able to hear. It is to break our silence with God’s saving love sent to sinners.*

**Be opened Jesus confronts the havoc waged by the Devil.**

* He does not turn away from the suffering. Deafness was no less distressing than demon possessed daughter.
* Isaiah, “Say to those who have an anxious heart, ‘Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.” (God comes to face the silent sadness)
* Word and Sacrament for life’s situations(Jesus heard)
* He has no need for spectacles as in politics. The Son deals with lives cut off from God & man.
* “And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue.” (To point out the problem is the promise that God cares)
* Baptism with cross made upon forehead and heart.

**Be opened Jesus wants to save more than the body.**

* He directs to the spiritual need of Himself as Savior.
* And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” (Intercedes as the Son of the Father out of love for sinners)
* “To you, O Lord, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit” (Psalms 28:1).
* He is the first and only voice who openly forgives.
* Silent life of sinner became filled with the unconditional love of God’s command. (Basis of baptism into Christ)
* Apostle James states, “Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?”

**Be opened Jesus sets us free to speak plainly.**

* He gives salvation not as a silent victory, but as a miracle confessed by the mouth.
* “And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.” (Words blessed and taught by Christ)
* James reminds us, “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”
* The others did take notice of Jesus’s Word. They saw what He did, but went against what He said.
* “But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.” (Caught up in excitement with the eyes at the expense of their ears)
* Luther tells us, “Let us, therefore, take careful note of this miracle and learn from it so that we truly become Christians by the Word and by our professing it. For this can come about in no other way than through the Word set in motion in the church by pastors and preacher, and in the home by fathers and mothers. With these fingers and spittle, Christ again and again bring it about in Christendom that the deaf have their ears opened and the mute become fluent.” (Sunday school, Daily life, world with Christ’s Word in it, etc…)

**In a world of silence, Jesus brings the sound of salvation and life.**