Deaf & Dumb? There's an app for that!

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[0:00] The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark. Glory to you, Lord Christ.

! Then Jesus returned from the region of Tyre, and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 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. And taking him aside from the crowd privately, Jesus put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting, touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, Ephatha, that is, be opened. And his ears were opened, and his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, he has done all things well. He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak. The Gospel of the
Lord. Praise to you, Lord Christ. Lord God, open our hearts and minds to speak and hear your holy word.
In Jesus' name, amen. Please be seated. All right, so first it says, turn on mic. Okay, did that. Well, Mary Ellen and I have spent almost half our married life in the South. Both of us have our degrees from schools in the South. And so I feel that I am qualified to let you know when you're in a redneck church. Jeff Foxworthy. You know you're in a redneck church. If people ask when they learn that Jesus fed the 5,000, whether the two fish were bass or catfish and what kind of bait he used to catch them.
You know you're in a redneck church when the pastor says, I'd like to ask Bubba to help take up the offering. Five guys and two women stand up. When a member of the church requests to be buried in his four-wheel drive truck because it ain't never been in a hole it couldn't get out of.
[2:40] In a congregation of 500 members, there are only three last names. Okay. People think rapture is what you get when you lift something too heavy.

The choir robes were donated and embroidered by Billy Bob's barbecue. Instead of a bell calling you to worship, it's a duck call.
And this is a good one. The minister and his wife drive matching pick-em-up trucks. No, I got a no on that one. And finally, the words of the benediction are, y'all come back now, yeah?
Okay, well, that's enough of that. Let's talk about serious stuff. The title of the sermon is Deaf and Dumb. Are we? Spiritually?
There's an app for that. So let's talk about that. First of all, this passage that was read today for the gospel. As you are aware, in the Anglican Church, we are on a lectionary of readings.
[3:48] And this year, each Sunday, has been a combination of Mark and John. And we're going to be in Mark most of September and October. So we're going to talk about that passage that I read today.

What's its context and what does it say? So the context is, Jesus is up in the north country. And by that, I don't mean Malone.
He's up in the north country of Tyre and Sidon, ministering. He's just cast a demon out of the Syrophoenician woman's daughter.
Now he's making his way back to the Sea of Galilee. Now, the way he gets there is different than we might expect.
It would be like if we were going to go from Syracuse to Albany to go by way of Binghamton. That's a little out of the way, isn't it? Jesus had a purpose for everything.
[4:49] He decided he was going to lollygag down. So instead of going like this, he went like this. That meant he had time to teach his disciples.

He was preparing them for the denouement of the gospel. Well, he took his tour and he arrived at a place called Decapolis.

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Decapolis is on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. It means ten cities. And they were Gentiles. They were not Jews.
He was spending a lot of time in Gentile territory where no good Jew would ever go. And it appears that the Gentiles had heard about his healing power.
Because he entered into a village and they brought a man who was deaf and dumb. And they asked him to heal the man. Well, there was a crowd.
[5:47] And Jesus, it says, Jesus took him away from the crowd. Maybe to give him some dignity. Maybe for some peace and quiet.

He took him away from the crowd. He put his fingers in his ears. He put his ears. Symbolizing something. Then he spit. And put the spittle on the man's tongue.
Indicating something. And then he looked up to heaven. Obviously, saying a prayer with a deep sigh. He looked into the man's eyes and said, Athatha.
Which is Aramaic for be opened. And then it's very carefully worded. It says, And the man could hear and then speak clearly.
Now, that's my story and I'm sticking to it. Because that's what it says in the scriptures. And I believe it. But the question is, What do we do with this story? So we move to the second part.
[6:54] And that is, What's it mean? I just told you what it said. Now, what's it mean? There's always some theology or spiritual truth in every story that's put in the New Testament.

Okay, so, Let's look at that for a moment. First of all, You heard Forrest read the Old Testament lesson. Does it have anything to do with today's story?
Listen to what it says. Isaiah 35, 5. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped. Then shall the lame one leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy at the coming of the Lord.
The prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus. The prophecy that they were waiting for the Messiah to come. This is an indication that the Messiah is here.
He's doing what the prophet Isaiah said a Messiah would do. Not to be a great military leader, but one who, step by step, person by person, brings healing, brings salvation.
[8:04] That's the first part. The second part we need to realize is that that man, when he was deaf and dumb, was in a sense, really kind of cut off from the world around him.

He couldn't hear. And he spoke the way many people who can't hear or haven't been able to hear speak. It's a dulled speech that it's hard to understand.
He was cut off. Just as we often are cut off from God and his purposes. We can't seem to hear him. We can't speak clearly about him or to him. It's sort of like we're deaf and dumb. The hard part is we're stuck in this because it's called sin.
We're stuck in the world of sin. You know, there's a university in Washington, D.C. called Gallaudet. Any of you ever heard of Gallaudet? It's a university for deaf people.
[9:03] A few years ago, when we were getting these transplants coming in where you couldn't hear, but now you could, and some really high-tech hearing aids, they had a sit-in by a number of the students and faculty protesting this because they felt that if you're deaf, you were made that way by God and you have no right to get a transplant or a hearing aid.

You do sign. You do American sign. Now, most of us would say that doesn't make any sense. It did for them and it almost ruined that university.
Okay? The same goes with our world living in a deep pit. We have been living an abnormal life for so long that if we begin to live a normal life, it seems abnormal.
That's where we are in America today. Go to Kentucky. What seems normal is looked on as abnormal today.
Today's secular culture and churchless Christianity try to tell us that sin is fine. You do what you want to do. Who can tell you how to live?
[10:24] You decide how you want to live. In fact, it's noise in our ears. There's so much noise we've gone deaf to God's word.

We can't speak God's word. We can't live with dead air. You know what dead air is on radio? Dead air is silence and a radio cannot handle silence.
That's called dead air and you must fill it. Okay? Even today on the radio, if you hear like the BBC News, this is the BBC News. the Syrians are trying to escape.

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All right? It's quiet. It's slow. All right? American radio. They're escaping Syria. It's like rats leaving a sinking ship. Okay?
We can't handle silence. Even the advertisements, even the news in many radio stations has a drum beat. Have you noticed that? We can't handle dead air.
[11:28] But until we learn to handle spiritual dead air, we can't hear God. There's just too much noise. And when we're deaf, this is from Tom Wright, a great Anglican theologian.

When we're deaf, we can't speak. Dumbness follows deafness. Until we can begin to clearly hear the Word of God, we really have nothing worthwhile to say to the world around us.
So, in the end, spiritually, we don't have a hearing problem. We have a heart problem. But, hey, there's an app for that.
Point three, application. Here comes the app, the application. I have to admit that I have often and still am deaf to God's Word, to my family, to you, to the world.
I have, I listen to you with my answer running. Okay? Maybe you have some of the same problems. We at Church of the Holy Trinity are often deaf and dumb to what God is plainly telling us above our agendas.
[12:57] We have trouble hearing each other with a sense of grace. We have trouble hearing and speaking to the world right around us, houses right behind us, around us.

We can't hear and we can't speak. There is an app for that and it is hearing on a whole new level. Let the dead air begin.
Stop the drum beat. Let's listen. Well, okay, so far, but what's this heart problem I'm talking about? The heart problem is what keeps us from hearing. Now, Romans 10, 9, and 10 is not just a Baptist verse. It applies to Anglicans as well.
It says, For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
[14:00] It's not just a Baptist word. You will be saved. For with the heart you believe and are justified, and with your tongue you confess and are saved.

Sometimes our ears are opened and we can hear when we simply lay our lives into God's hands. And when we speak Jesus, speak Jesus, there's a great prayer, the Jesus prayer, Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior, have mercy on me a sinner.
We just say that prayer. And suddenly we begin to hear. And suddenly our tongues are loosed to be able to speak to God.
You know, sometimes we need to literally get away to hear Jesus. He took the deaf and dumb man away from the madding crowd. Sometimes we need to get away.
I'm what's called a hermit jogger. I don't mind jogging with others, but if you leave me alone, I'll just like to jog myself on a trail and spend time with the Lord.
[15:20] Except for birds and squirrels running, there's no noise. There's a chance, there's dead air, there's a chance for God to speak to me, for me to hear him.

Sometimes we have to listen even when we don't want to hear. I have this true story of when I was in the Air Force, I got orders to go to Korea without my family.
I did not like that idea at all. We did everything we could to stop this transfer. And finally one day Jesus said, just shut up.
Well, I'm used to commands. So I shut up and I put it in his hands and decided I'm not going to worry about anymore. And we didn't, I didn't go to Korea.
It was amazing. It was like a miracle. We got to go to Turkey instead. But we went together. That was neat. That was neat. Sometimes we just need to shut up, stop complaining, and just let Jesus minister to us.
[16:27] So another part of the app is silence. It's reading scripture. scripture. It's listening to godly speakers. It's listening to prayer partners.

And it's talking to God as though we are talking to a respected loved one, which I hope he is to us. He's not an oblong blur up there.
He's a personal God who wants to do business with us. We can talk with him. So, we're on a journey. As Jesus was on the journey with his disciples going like this rather than this, we are his disciples on the journey.
He took a long time to get to Decapolis because there was a lot to teach along the way. And so with us. When we decidedly follow Jesus, we need to get ready for some surprises.

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We need to realize we're going to do some detours. We're going to find some solutions we never expected and never really cared about. There's a great prayer that was written by a Confederate soldier.
[17:48] It says, I asked God for strength that I might achieve. I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey. I asked for health that I might do greater things.

I was given infirmity that I might do better things. I asked for riches that I might be happy. I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men. I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God. I asked for all things that I might enjoy life.
I was given life that I might enjoy all things. I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I had hoped for. Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.
I, among all people, am most richly blessed. blessed. That's for you and for me. The conclusion is, Jesus wants to take each one of us aside, away from the crowd.
[19:01] He wants to put his fingers in our ears to tell us we're going to hear him. He wants to lay his finger on our tongue to tell us he's going to give us the words.

he wants to look up to heaven for us with his arm around us and say, you're my beloved. Be opened.
Let us pray. Blessed Lord God, you call us to live in a world that's uncertain at best. But we know, Jesus, that you are there blazing a path for us with your machete, you're cutting through the jungle. We have simply to follow you. Lord, help us to hear and to speak as you would have us. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.
Turn off the mic.

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