

# "Ephphatha" - A Liberating Word From Jesus!

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Date: 11 April 2021

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 00 ] A warm welcome to you all today. The sunshine, I think, expresses what's in our hearts at being able to gather together once again here in person. And we also welcome those who are joining us from wherever they are joining us in the world at home as they log on to our service today.

We trust that God will bless us as we meet together and that we will express our happiness to him in our worship as we worship him together. Just a reminder that envelopes, collection envelopes for the freewill offering can now be taken to any of the services that you come to, as you know already, I'm sure.

But there is just a reminder, too, that every second Saturday of each month there will be a collection in the MAM Hall while the restrictions take place. There will be a collection every second Saturday so some of the deacons and office bearers will be there to oversee that.

Let's begin our worship with reading, first of all, from the prophecy of Isaiah and chapter 35. Isaiah chapter 35.

And we'll read from the beginning through the chapter. The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad.

[ 1 : 19 ] The desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it. The majesty of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. 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. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break out in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water.

In the haunt of jackals where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there and it shall be called the way of holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it.

[ 2 : 24 ] It shall be, it shall belong to those who walk on the way. Even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast come upon it.

They shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing. Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.

They shall obtain gladness and joy and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. We pray that God will follow that reading with his own blessing.

Let's now join together in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord. Our gracious and ever-blessed God, as we give thanks for this day, so we give thanks for this occasion when we are able physically to gather together here in this building once again.

We bless you, O Lord, that we come as a people whose desire it is to worship you. We thank you, Lord, as we have read your word already of how our worship is to be marked with joy and gladness, as well as other elements that characterize our approach to God as we come in the reverence that is due and also with the joy in our hearts that expresses itself in worship to God.

[ 3 : 46 ] We bless you, O Lord, for all that makes us content today in your salvation for the way that your salvation contains such elements as make us sing for gladness, the reconciliation that you have effected through Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, our adoption into your own spiritual family, the grace of hope in our hearts towards a better country than this world affords.

O Lord, we give thanks today for the reality of these things, for the way that they cause us inwardly to rejoice in your presence.

And we bless you today, O Lord, that you are our God, that we want no other to rule our lives but yourself, that we are content, O Lord, with your own sovereign control over our lives and over everything else that we know of in the course of history, even though there are many things, O Lord, that mystify us, cause us at times to be even perplexed and questioning.

Yet, O Lord, we do not at any time consider that you are not in control, that you are not the Lord, that you have in any way departed from your great plan that you have set in motion and have had in place from all eternity.

We thank you today, O Lord, for each other, for the company of your people, for the fellowship that we enjoy, that you have created through your Spirit, and for the many promises that meet us, O Lord, as we gather together in this way and as we find others joining with this physical meeting.

[ 5 : 28 ] We thank you for their participation and bless you that they too are able to engage in worship where they are as they join us here. We thank you for the bond that your Spirit creates, that unites your people together, that enables them, Lord, to know of that unity and oneness that no other can break.

And we thank you for that assurance that there is no power in heaven or on earth that can actually break the bond that you create through Jesus Christ, through the blessing of your Spirit.

And we thank you, Lord, that we anticipate that this will be the case for your people forevermore. So bless us, Lord, here we pray. Sanctify us through your Word and Spirit.

Bless your Word to our hearts and to our condition and to our situation in life. Grant your blessing to us, O Lord, as we come to think of our place in the world and as we think of our circumstances at this time, so we give thanks, O Lord, for your continued care of us.

We pray today for those who have added difficulties in their lives, particularly through this pandemic. Bless, we pray, those who are ill through it. Bless, too, those who have long-term illness with regard to the effects of the COVID.

[ 6 : 53 ] Lord, we ask that you would graciously bless them, too, give their families the grace and the patience and the strength to deal with these situations.

We pray for those who have lost loved ones during this past year. We ask, O Lord, that you would use this pandemic, we pray, as you have done in other times, to bring people to know yourself, to enable us all, O Lord, to realize our dependence upon you, that it is in you that we live and move and have our being, that we need you, that we are dependent upon you, that we need not and cannot rely upon our own strength.

O Lord, teach us your ways and show us your paths and lead us, we pray, in those ways everlasting. And teach us especially to reverence you, to obey you, to serve you, to love you, and to love your word, to love your law, to love your commands, to love your people, to love others, even as we have been loved by you.

O Lord God, we ask that all of these may be characteristic of our lives too. And we ask that today your word will leave that blessing in our lives by your application of it so that our lives will be the more improved.

We pray today for her majesty, our queen, and ask that you will bless her in her time of loss. Lord, we give thanks for the many years that she and her late husband shared together in a long and contented married life.

[ 8 : 29 ] We thank you for his service to the country, for his commitment to duty, for the many things that he engaged in as concert to the queen, and for his own willingness to serve in that way.

Because we know, Lord, that though there may be many opinions of him as a person, we know that he gave such good example of attendance to duty and commitment to service to his country and to his queen and to his family.

We bless you today, O Lord, for the queen's leadership in the nation. We ask that you would comfort her at this time. We pray that you would be her God and her stay during this time of sorrow and of loss.

And you would help us too as a nation as we once again contemplate the death of someone who was so prominent for so many years. O Lord, help us, we pray, to reckon with our own mortality and to realize that whatever position we have in life, it comes to an end.

And it comes to an end with a sigh, with a sigh of death as the psalmist tells us. So help us to be wise, to measure our days and to apply our hearts unto wisdom.

[ 9 : 44 ] So remember us as a people. Remember us, we pray at this time in our governments in Scotland and elsewhere in the nation. We pray that you'd bless those in leadership over us. And as we come in our nation, Lord, to have an election soon in Scotland, we pray that you would grant us, Lord, the wisdom and the discernment and the concern to cast our votes wisely and to do so in a way that would recognize our duty in doing so and our privilege in doing so and our freedom, Lord, that you have given us to elect a government over us.

And we ask, O Lord, that we may respect these freedoms, that you would help our government itself to honor these freedoms and to hold them dear in their own hearts.

Now, Lord, we ask that you would bless us here. Continue, we pray, to bless us as a congregation. And as we think of this evening and as we think of our sister congregation, the High Free, we pray for them as they too begin to meet in person here this evening and with our own online services. Bless them, we pray. Grant your blessing as they seek to begin this once again like yourselves. And so we pray that you would bless all the gatherings of your people today throughout the world. We recognize, Lord, that we are part of a great spiritual family, a number who worship the Lord and who know Christ as Lord. And we pray that we may be conscious of that oneness of the Spirit and the bonds of peace.

[ 11 : 23 ] Hear us, we pray, and forgive our sin for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, children, I want to just say a word to you. And in John chapter 4, we read that Jesus, sorry, John chapter 6, that should be verse 48.

We read that, John chapter 6, verse 68, sorry. After many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him, Jesus said to the twelve, Do you want to go away as well?

Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.

Now, children, this was a time when many of those who had started following Jesus as disciples turned away from him. They stopped following him because they no longer liked or accepted the teaching that he was giving about himself.

And the teaching here in John 6 was that he was presenting himself as the one they needed to believe in and to trust in. He talked about his own sacrifice of his death, spoke about shedding his blood and so on.

[ 12 : 40 ] And they couldn't accept this. They thought this was going too far. It was too difficult for them. It wasn't that they didn't understand it, but they just could not accept that you needed to go that far of just trusting your life to this Jesus and that he and he alone would be the Savior.

That's what was happening. Many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus then turned to the twelve disciples and he said, do you want to go away as well?

And you'll find that today, that in the world that we live in today, there are many people that turn their back on Jesus. That even if they've shown some interest, sadly, they'll come to a point where they turn away from him and they say, well, it's going too far to expect me just to give my whole life to him and to accept him as the only way by which I can be right with God and come into friendship with God.

But that's what the Bible tells us we need to be and to do. And so Jesus is really asking me and he's asking you this question today, do you also want to go away?

Are you going to stop following me or are you going to go on so that you trust your life to me more and more as each day goes by? That's why this question is so important to us and it also reveals what Peter thought of Jesus in the way that he answered him.

[ 14 : 13 ] because he said, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life and we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God.

What a wonderful answer Peter gave to the Lord's question. Lord, he said, to whom shall we go? In other words, Peter is really saying, Lord, there is no one else that can give us what you give us, that can be for us what you are to us.

In other words, Peter is really saying, Jesus is fully and only the Savior. And that's what you and I need to say as well to him. To whom else can we go?

Where else do we find what you find in Jesus himself? And that's why today, that's how he would want us to answer his question as well.

And you notice Peter said, we have believed and come to know. And both these things are important. The believing and coming to know.

[ 15 : 19 ] It's not just a believing with your head certain things that are true such as you do when you're doing your arithmetic or your mathematics in school. You believe certain things the way you work out the puzzles or the questions.

We do have the use of our heads or our brains or our minds in believing in Jesus. Of course we do. But it's more than that. We believe, he said, we have come to believe and have come to know that you are the Christ, the Holy One of God.

In other words, Peter is talking about coming into a personal knowledge of Jesus to know him as a friend. You know, today if somebody asks you, do you know Boris Johnson or do you know Nicola Sturgeon you would say, most of us would say, well I know who he is, I know who she is, but I don't know them.

I've never met them, I haven't got a personal relationship with them. This is what Peter is saying, we have come to know you Lord. We have come into this personal knowledge and relationship with you.

And that's what a Christian is. Somebody who knows Jesus, who has come to believe and to know that he is the Savior. So I hope you today children will be able to say this for yourselves and as you grow up that you'll be able to say it more and more.

[ 16 : 44 ] As Jesus asks the question, will you also go away that you'll say, no, where else can I go? To whom else can I go? You have the words of eternal life.

Now let's pray the Lord's Prayer together. Amen. Now our second reading is from the Gospel of Mark and that's in chapter 7 and this is the passage we're going to spend some time looking at this morning.

Mark chapter 7 and at verse 31. This is Jesus returning from Tyre and Sidon where he had met with this Syrophenician woman.

this woman of Canaan in the previous verses and at verse 31 then he returned from the region of Tyre and Sidon 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. They begged him to lay his hand on him. And taking my side from the crowd privately he put his fingers into his ears and after spitting touched his tongue.

[ 18 : 26 ] Looking up to heaven he sighed and said to him Ephatha that is be opened. And his ears were opened the tongue was released and he spoke plainly and Jesus charged them to tell no one.

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 hear and the mute speak.

So as we continue looking at the miracles of Jesus we have done quite a number of them previously as we do so we come to this one here which is in its own category in its own category has some remarkable features of it.

Due to the wonders of modern technology and surgery we find that people who have been born deaf can actually come to have a fair measure of hearing through the likes of cochlear implants and it's wonderful to see a child who has been born deaf coming to have a cochlear implant then coming to hear sounds and then coming to articulate speech which improves as time goes on as he's able or she's able to pick up what they hear others saying in conversation.

But that takes time. The implant itself needs to be adjusted from time to time. The volume needs to be slowly, gradually turned up. The sounds become somewhat more distinguishable as the listening goes on as the thing improves.

[ 20 : 05 ] So it takes a measure of time and even as the person begins to speak it's obvious to begin with that they've got difficulty informing the words and the sounds but that too improves as time goes on.

So it's a wonderful thing but it does take such a long time understandably. How different is this case with Jesus? Instantly the moment Jesus speaks this man who was deaf and had a bad speech impediment because of that instantly hears and instantly is able to speak.

And it presents us again with the fact that this Jesus this miracle working Jesus is far more than a miracle worker because you find coming across from this passage as we've seen in the previous passage that he's more than a miracle worker though he's able to perform miracles he is the restorer he is restoring here a man's hearing in order to have restored the man's speech but that spiritually means that Jesus is the great restorer of our persons he restores our souls he recreates us through his own power he gives us an opened ear to listen to God he enables us to speak to

God as we were not able to do before or didn't want to do before so as you see Jesus the restorer of this man in a physical sense that's really presenting to us this wonderful miracle working Jesus as the savior who opens minds and opens hearts and opens ears opens hearing and opens tongues to speak let's look firstly at the man's condition as we find it described then we look at the Lord's treatment and thirdly we look at the people's astonishment here's the man's condition first of all described for us here by Mark they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment and they begged him to lay his hand on them now this man's deafness it seems that this man was deaf most likely from birth so that his attempts at speech would really just have been just some sort of sounds that would be very difficult to really distinguish unless you were very used to being with this person in other words the problem with his hearing is what left the problem with his speech because he was not able to hear because he had that blockage in his hearing then that meant he could not actually communicate and speak in the way that people without that problem obviously are able to speak we're able to pick up from our hearing the language that we are brought up with so that we're then able to communicate and speak in that language the hearing comes first the speaking comes next the speaking is dependent on the hearing if the hearing is defective it's very likely the speech will have some measure of defect as well depending on how deaf anyone is so the healing began with the hearing and then moved to the speech that's the order that we're given here as

Jesus dealt with him as we'll see he first of all dealt with the hearing put his fingers into his ears and then he touched his tongue that's the order of nature if you like the hearing goes ahead of the speaking and so it is spiritually as well that's exactly the same as the Bible tells us and as you find it especially in the likes of Romans chapter 10 faith comes by hearing hearing the word of God that is one of our big human problems isn't it that we are not actually able or don't want to listen to God to hear the voice of God and because we are not in the practice naturally in our sinful self of hearing the voice of God we're not in the practice of speaking to God we don't have the communication from God entering into our souls in a way that enables us to speak to God in fellowship in friendship in communion and all of that really is highlighted as you see spiritually by that particular by this particular miracle and so today you see what a great privilege we have that we are able not just to listen to the preaching of the gospel to the

[ 24 : 46 ] Bible being read and able to do that for ourselves there's a higher privilege than that because that itself is actually while it's a great thing it's not sufficient to bring us into that relationship with God where we hear him gladly and where we speak back to him we need to have something just in addition to the mere hearing of the word and I don't want to actually suggest that that's not a great privilege we need to actually hear the voice of God speaking to us through his word through his spirit addressing our need pointing out our need bringing us to the knowledge of Jesus himself as I was saying to the children that's really our great problem we are not by nature listeners to God and it's God himself who comes to open our hearing and therefore open our tongue spiritually so that we can communicate and gladly communicate with God isn't that the great privilege of your own life isn't that the one thing above all that you value in your life that you have been given if you are today

I hope you have been given this communication from God that you've heard the voice of God through the gospel and that you take delight in speaking to him and praying to him and seeking to praise him on a daily basis that's one of our great privileges to know God in that living relationship that communicates with him and listens to him so that we speak back to him here is the man's problem and you see the people who brought him to Jesus they begged him they really urged him strongly but you see to lay his hand on him they had their own view of how Jesus was going to deal with this how Jesus was going to cure this man and you can understand that they probably had some experience maybe they saw Jesus doing things before where he had laid his hand on people where he had touched them and where he brought healing and here they are saying we urge they were urging him to lay his hand on this man in other words they've got their own idea as to what Jesus must do in order to cure this man but you see Jesus although he did touch him it wasn't just as they thought he was going to deal with him and that's how it always is because he deals with us in a different way as we distinguish one from another in our experience of God he hasn't come into your life exactly the same way he has come into my life there will always be differences there will always be variations even though there are of course common features in the sense that he uses his word his own spirit is active in that but there will be differences of circumstances differences in

which our background may be taken account of by Jesus so there's that variety of ways of dealing with us and yet it's really exactly the same in this sense that he comes to deal with our problem of our not being in communion with God so today as you are listening to the gospel here I pray that this will be your experience as well that you will come if you haven't already to know how important it is to hear God to hear God through the Bible through your own reading of the Bible as you come to it pray that God and say this to the children especially although I'm saying it to myself and to adults as well because our life is in such a hurry a lot of the time we find it difficult maybe at times to spend a little bit of time before we read the Bible just pleading with God Lord please give me to hear your voice don't let me actually read your word without hearing your voice speaking to me addressing me that's what we want to be at all times in our interaction with the word of God that we will actually hear God speaking and that we be listening to him so here's here's the man's condition and that takes us to the Lord's treatment first thing you see is privacy then you find precision and then you find power privacy precision and power in the treatment of this man by Jesus privacy first of all taking him aside from the crowd privately he put his fingers into his ear after spitting he then touched his tongue you see he took him aside and I think that's really the way by which

Jesus taking him away from the crowd because he was obviously deaf and unable to communicate properly Jesus wanted to focus his mind to have his mind concentrated in such a way that he established a rapport between himself and Jesus in other words this is really Jesus securing a personal bond with this man he wants to actually make sure that nothing disturbs his concentration while Jesus is dealing with him that's exactly how it is in the way that he changes ourselves the way he comes into your experience and mine there may be somebody today here who is very much personally engaged with Jesus speaking to them and it's to you as if nobody else is here but yourself that's how it should be in that sense that when Jesus comes to speak to us we are very conscious then that there is this interaction between ourselves and him it's a very personal thing it's a very private thing in that sense we experience that individual personal touch of

[ 30 : 42 ] Jesus so as to establish this living relationship this bond with himself that's that's where it begins and then when he's dealt with us he then joins us to the rest of his family to all those others who believe in him and have come to know him so today this is really once again a privilege to have a private audience with Jesus to have Jesus take us aside as it were even if we are gathered with others such as we are today even if you're listening online today and sitting on your own it's so important that Jesus will actually speak to you and you will listen to him and you will come to know that like he did with this man he's taking you aside deliberately he's speaking to you personally for a particular reason so that you will come to be bonded to him that you will come to be in a relationship with him that will be established forevermore as that between you and the saviour there's the privacy in the lord's treatment firstly but then there's precision and one of the things that we are so thankful for is that

Jesus never misdiagnoses a problem he knew instantly what this man's problem was and he knew instantly how to go about fixing it Jesus never misdiagnoses our problem even if he's speaking to us somewhat harshly as it seems to us if he's showing you today your sin for what it really is if he's really emphasizing the nature of that sin that you need that dealt with the inherent wickedness of our heart mine and yours as we are sinners if that's what he's showing you today please don't think that he's dealing with you in any other way than for your good he has not misdiagnosed your problem he's not overstressing it he's not come to the wrong conclusion about us as sinners he always diagnoses exactly what our condition is so that we will come to be treated by him in a way that meets that need exactly that's what he's doing with this man here but you notice the sequence that he followed he first of all put his fingers into his ears as we said before he's dealing firstly with a problem in the man's hearing and then after spitting he touched his tongue with his finger he's then dealing with the organ of speech the tongue that's the sequence that he's following but why is he doing this well I think it's really not so much to do with this being the means by which Jesus cured him this is really essentially a matter of communication with the man he's taking the man aside he wants to concentrate his mind and now he's using what's effectively sign language which is what you need to do with someone who's deaf sign language communicates to them what's in your mind and you're trying to convey to them and this is really Jesus sign language for this man and what he's doing basically is explaining to the man what's happening and how it's coming about because he doesn't just touch his tongue and put his finger into his ears you see first

of all he looking up to heaven sighed and said so the man is really seeing all of this in his private audience with Jesus he sees Jesus doing this with his fingers and putting him into his ears then touching his tongue and looking up to heaven so the man is aware of where this power is coming from that's going to deal with him everything there is really for the man to begin to understand what the

Lord is doing and how this cure has come about and so it is when we are born again and the Lord comes into your life to show you yourself and to show you your problem and to show you himself as the answer this is exactly what happens isn't it you are aware that something is happening even if you can't explain it at the time something is happening and it is a greater power than you have yourself it is not the power of positive thinking it is not the power of some philosophy or other that you have come to learn it is the power of heaven it is the power of God it is the power of Christ it is the power of the Holy Spirit it is the power of his truth as Jesus uses it and you realize that it is from heaven and you realize this is not of myself and even you say at times I don't know what's happening to me some people begin their Christian life like that they are not able to explain or to really know what's happening it takes a while for them to understand but most of us have been brought up under the gospel so we know what's happening when God speaks to us when he actually comes to show us this is

God speaking to you this is myself showing you your heart showing you your need it's from heaven you realize that's not an ordinary communication it's not an ordinary power it's something that God himself is involved in it's from him and that's what a great encouragement that is for us in terms of our preaching of the gospel none of us would ever enter into a pulpit if we thought that the effectiveness of our preaching was dependent on our self or our ability to speak or to preach or on our understanding or whatever else it is is personal to ourselves our great encouragement in coming to step into a pulpit such as today is that it is God who makes his word effective it's the power of heaven it's the power of Christ the savior that actually deals with our problem and nothing else can do for you what that power can do or for me it's a great encouragement to our witness to our evangelist and to whatever else we're doing in our service for the Lord that it's from heaven that the ability comes and because it's from heaven it is bound to be effective it is bound to actually result in God's own power recreating people spiritually wherever he sees fit to do that it's that precise it's the precision that comes from his taking us aside and privately dealing with us but thirdly you notice there's power and you notice first of all he sighed before the miracle took place looking up to heaven he sighed and said

[ 37 : 38 ] Ephatha and Mark here uses the word Ephatha which is Aramaic just to enable us to just have that word as Jesus spoke it Ephatha and if the man was as he would have been probably used to doing some sort of lip reading to try and follow what people were saying to him well this is a word where you mouth the word it comes across very clearly as you mouth the word Ephatha somebody lip reading would find it relatively easy to follow Ephatha and here is Jesus saying this but he sighed first of all now we saw last time an element of this in the previous miracle we refer to John as well to John chapter 11 where Jesus comes to the grave of Lazarus he groaned within himself he sighed deeply within himself three times we find that mentioned in that passage in John and remember we said that at that occasion and it's really the same in this instance as well it's an expression of Christ's sorrow Christ's sadness over our sinful condition that the human beings that he had created had come to this or in Lazarus's case had come to being entombed in a sepulcher you see

Christ as he looks at our condition or you might say God as he looks at our condition he doesn't look at it dispassionately he doesn't actually change our lives in a way that just simply as it were flicks a spiritual switch and that's all he has to do with it Jesus has come here emotionally into the situation he is moved by this man's plight he is deeply moved in himself he sighs deeply in himself there's an element of the groaning there that's mentioned in John 11 and what a what a wonderful wonderful emphasis that is for us today as well as we sit here and as we seek to listen to the voice of God through the gospel we are not dealing with a God who is cold and indifferent and mechanical and just does things for the sake of it without being in some way or other engaged at all the Lord is so engaged in our plight that he sighs deeply over it he comes to show how it as it were has broken his heart that we have come to be the sinners we are that we are subject and liable to death instead of living forever as he designed us to be that's the

Jesus that's the God we worship God who has that view of us in our sinfulness in our sinful need and our lostness and there's so many places as you know yourselves throughout the Bible where that's brought out where you find rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents where you find the father of the prodigal throwing his arms around him and welcoming him clasping him to his bosom he's returned he's there that's what I was looking forward to the father was saying that is a demonstration in parable of Jesus who receives sinners and eats with them he doesn't just invite you today through the gospel to come and know himself and share with him and sit down with him at a spiritual meal and live forever he just doesn't do that in a way as it were that just delivers you that notice coldly just listen to the love listen to the the sigh with which he presents that to you as if to say well I am so so deeply moved at the fact of your lostness what else could it be but being deeply moved in order to give himself to the death of the cross that we might be redeemed so he sighed and then he put his fingers in his ears having done that he sighed and said ephatha you see that's just one word ephatha and it reminds you of something doesn't it doesn't it remind you of what happened in Genesis the record you have in Genesis of the creation of the universe where you find there that as God began the creation of the ordered universe he said let there be light and there was light and all the way down through the chapter you've got God saying something and then it coming to pass instantly the creative voice of God the voice of God that brings things into being that did not exist till then there's the same voice the same power the same wonderful effectiveness of God in redemption as he is here with this man because this word be opened is really very much at the heart of our salvation of our redemption the expression really just reminds us not only of God's creation in the beginning but how he foretold as we saw in the way in which we looked at Isaiah we read Isaiah 35 and remember in that prophecy how it prophesies of God or Jesus opening the eyes of people he says then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy that's what you see fulfilled in this incident and in Jesus himself remember that is first of all in his own resurrection what is his resurrection it's the opening of the grave it's death opening to his voice in order to release the body of Lazarus or whoever it was like the young man of the widow of Nain at that moment caught up and enclosed in death well here is Jesus one word and it's changed death releases its grip and then of course you find the same with the spiritually dead being brought to life that's what happens when you're converted when you're born again

God deals with our deadness and he changes that Ephesians chapter 2 verses 5 to 6 and then verse 10 even when we were dead in our trespasses he made us alive together with Christ by grace you've been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus for we are his workmanship there's God the great craftsman who crafted the universe in the beginning in accordance with his own design and his own will and what does he do when he takes a person who's dead and trespasses and sins well he takes his design of salvation and he brings that person alive and he recreates that person in his own image so that that person comes to be a new creation same power the same God the same effect the same result and here is what this miracle teaches us

[ 44 : 54 ] Jesus in the practice of opening lives opening things which were closed opening lives which were closed and of course that goes through right through to the day of judgment in John 5 verses 28 and 9 we read do not marvel at this for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out those who have done good to the resurrection of life those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment or as Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 5 we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that we may receive the things done in this body whether good or evil how is that brought about it's brought about through resurrection where the dead are raised to meet with the judge it's not pleasant to think about that it's not popular teaching it's something that people don't want to accept understandably because it's such an awesome thing and remember for you as a

Christian it's such a wonderful prospect as well that in your resurrection from the dead you'll come to meet with Jesus who's going to pronounce you righteous so that the whole universe will know what he has done in bringing you to know himself redeemingly on the other hand those who are not in Christ those who have done sinfully and have not been changed and didn't want to change will be raised to the resurrection of damnation judgment Hitler Pol Pot Mussolini all the great dictators of the 20th century and previous centuries and it may be centuries to come people may think they've escaped justice they've escaped judgment maybe they committed suicide before they could be tried

as in the case of

Hitler it's not the case he will and we will all come to be raised from the dead so that we will meet with the Lord in his judgment and it's a wonderful wonderful prospect if you're in Christ and if not it should fill you with dread because the same Jesus who is rejected in this life is the Jesus who judges us in the next oh make sure today friend that you know him that you've come to give your life to him that you come to know that this Jesus is your transformer your restorer as well because that's what really this is setting before us and I want to finish just thirdly with the astonishment that the people showed we've seen the man's condition and the Lord's treatment and the people's astonishment is also brought out here

Jesus charged them to tell no one they were astonished beyond measure saying he has done all things well he even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak now I think there's something there as well that reminds you of the creation and the words of Genesis we've already said that he opened reminds us of God's creative word then bringing the world as it is into being but also he has done all things well reminds you of what you find in Genesis chapter 1 where God looked at everything he had made and it was all very good all very acceptable to him he has done all things well see how it goes back to God's creative work and the result of that being what is pleasing to himself what is beautiful for him to look at and for him to accept that's what really this is reminding us as well of that the work of redemption the work of God's redeeming grace the work of God changing lives to be like himself is not just simply a marvelous powerful creative work it's a work that's very good that's absolutely beautiful that fills us with astonishment because at the end of the day it is a more wonderful thing a more wonderful thing to remake what sin has broken into saints to remake sinful human beings into holy saints than to create sinless human beings to begin with that's what it amounts to one of my favorite programs on television is the repair shop sure you've seen most of you have seen the repair shop and when you come to see what's brought into the repair shop and you look at it as it's brought out of the box or whatever and laid in front of the craftsman or craftswoman is going to try and repair they say they will never what are they going to do how are they going to bring that together smashed up crockery or something that's so old and battered you think there's no way that that's going to be anything like it was when it was first of all made in the beginning but then you see the craftsman whether it's a silversmith or ceramics or woodwork whatever and it shows you just how they go about so patiently recrafting this renewing it putting it together adding bits to it that need to be put together and then when the uncovering takes place and you see it there in pristine condition you think

I don't think that was ever broken and very often you'll find the people who come for their object and come back excited until you see what they've made of it they look at it and say how did you do that I can't see the joints how did you do that isn't that the case here how did Jesus do this because he's Jesus because it's the Lord because he knows how because no one else can do it the way he does it may God bless these thoughts on his word to us let's pray Lord our God as we bring before you our broken lives as sinners we give thanks that there is restoration for us and we give thanks that our restoration lies in your hands Lord we ask that you would take us today and remould and refashion us so that we will once again bear your image and that you will declare over us through your own grace at work that it is all very good we thank you Lord for the way in which you are still changing lives in our world we pray that our own lives may day by day be given to you so that your work of restoration may go on hear us now we pray and pardon our sin for

[ 52 : 28 ] Jesus sake amen now we're going to conclude with singing I'm just going to be leading the singing as you know we're not allowed to sing yet and may the Lord hasten the day when we are able to sing together as we used to and as we love you can actually just go in your minds over the words as I'm singing them out it's Psalm 145 the second version of Psalm 145 on page 444 and we're going to be singing to the tune wear him verses 8 to 14 the Lord our God is gracious compassionate is he also in mercy he is plenteous but unto wrath and anger slow I need to wear this visor because that's part of the regulations although it does muffle one's voice the Lord our God is gracious compassionate is he also the Lord our God is gracious compassionate is he also immersed he is plenteous but unto wrath and anger slow good unto all men is the

Lord for all his works his mercy is thy works all praise to thee afford thy saints O Lord thy name shall bless the glory the glory of thy kingdom show shall they and of thy power tell that so men's sons his needs may know his kingdom's grace that doth excel thy kingdom have none end at all it doth through ages all remain the

Lord upholdeth all that fall the cast down raiseth up again after the benediction if you please just remain in your seats until you're directed from the building and as already mentioned previously please sanitize your hands when you're leaving and please maintain the distance between the bubbles that you're in as you leave of a two meter distancing and then we just go to our cars immediately we don't gather outside for the moment at least and may the day come soon when we're able to re-engage in fellowship in that way outside as well and to that end we pray that this pandemic will increasingly disappear from our experience as human beings and that God will grant us that liberty through his own grace and through his own mercy we'll stand out for the benediction now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore Amen Christ one even Thank you. Thank you.