

# Trinity XII

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Preacher: Seminarian Ian Jarrells

[ 0 : 00 ] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen. May we see you. As we heard in our Gospel text today, Jesus heals a man who was both deaf and had a speech impediment.

Jesus sticks his fingers into the man's ears, spits on his fingers, and then touches his tongue. He was then healed of his deafness and his speech impediment. To our modern ears, this healing sounds somewhat repulsive.

Not only does Jesus stick his fingers inside the ears of this man, but he spits on his fingers and touches the man's tongue. Anyone unfamiliar with these stories would be wondering why exactly the healing had to take place in this manner.

Could he not have declared that he was healed and that be the end of it like he did to others he healed? While this question is good to consider, let us focus instead on the person that was healed.

[ 1 : 05 ] Before Jesus heals this man, St. Mark's Gospel illustrates that he healed the daughter of a woman who was a Gentile. At that time, he was in the region of Tyre and Sidon. After this, he went to the region of Galilee, and this is where he meets the man who was blind with a speech impediment.

The reason why these locations are important is because the area which he was in was populated with Gentiles. According to Isaiah 35, which was our Old Testament text for this morning, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

When Jesus healed this man, he couldn't even follow Jesus' command to keep silent about what happened to him. The more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. This passage speaks as a fulfillment to Isaiah 35.

The prophet was speaking of a people who were deaf to the word of God, and were therefore unable to speak praises to him. The healing of this man exhibits the kept promise of a prophet. The Gentiles can now hear, understand, and proclaim the word of the Lord to other people. With all this being said, I'm going to suggest that we see this passage as speaking of our baptism.

[ 2 : 20 ] Now, I'm aware that there are no explicit references to baptism in this passage. The closest thing to water that is even mentioned is our Lord's saliva. Consider for a moment, however, the early Roman rite of baptism.

In the early days of the church, the baptismal rite in Rome was slightly different than the one we practice here today. After the baptism had taken place, the priest or bishop would take their fingers and put them in the ears of the baptized person, and then touch their mouth or nose.

Their baptism opened their ears to hear the word of God, and it freed them to speak his praises and declare it to others, symbolically represented by the fingers in the ears and on the tongue.

While the priest's actions were done to symbolize something, their baptism actually enacted what was symbolized by the priest. It provided them with the privilege of being born as sons and daughters of God, and it also gave them reason to listen to the word of the Lord and to sing his praises.

We then should see ourselves as the deaf man with a speech impediment. We were originally deafened to the word of God, and therefore unable to speak his praises.

[ 3 : 37 ] We were far off from God. We were helpless when God came to us. But God had mercy upon us. Through baptism, we have been brought near and are no longer to consider ourselves deaf to his word.

Now that we can hear the word of God rightly, this passage teaches us two things about what happened in our baptism. The first is that we have been brought into the family of God. St. John has written in his gospel that we are born not from flesh or blood, but from the will of God. He also says that we are reborn by water and by spirit.

This rebirth, not accomplished through the hands of creatures, should give us confidence in our place before him. St. Peter says elsewhere that our baptism can and should lead us to a good conscience because it is an appeal to God.

When we wonder if we're loved by God and if he has truly our best interest in mind, we can rest assured knowing that we have been baptized, being born of water and the spirit.

[ 4 : 42 ] It is not a right that we have earned, but rather a gift that has been lovingly bestowed to us. The second thing that this passage teaches us about baptism is that it exhorts us not only to hear the word, but to obey it.

Often times the scriptures refer to those who are deaf and who are mute. Our Old Testament text this morning even makes reference to the blind, deaf and mute. The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

Biblical scholars have noticed that many of these references are talking about the Gentile nations. We find it fitting, then, that our gospel text had Jesus going through Tyre and Sidon, famous Gentile areas, right to this man who is both deaf and with a speech impediment.

After he is healed, he cannot but speak and proclaim his experience. Those who have experienced radical healing will feel more compelled to speak about it and to praise because of it.

Remembering that we should consider the same to have happened to ourselves that happened to this man, we are now exhorted to hear the word of God plainly and to obey it. While this can take many forms, might I suggest that the best way to consistently do this is through prayer.

[ 6 : 00 ] The prayers of morning and evening prayer, and even the liturgy within the Mass that we celebrate here today, are rich with the Scriptures, the word of God, which we have been called to hear now that our ears have been unstopped.

We should not only read through the liturgy and our morning and evening prayers as if we are slugging through, waiting to finally get to the good stuff of Christ in the Eucharist.

Not that it's not good stuff, don't hear me wrongly. If anything, the good stuff of Christ in the Mass should encourage us to thoughtfully pray these words together and ingrain them into our very lives. Almighty and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we are to pray and art want to give more than either we desire or deserve, pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy, forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid and giving us those things which are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, the Son, our Lord, Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.