

*Trinity 12 sermon 2017 Fr Michael Cawthon*

Last week we spoke of light and darkness, and how we have corrupted the Holy Word by denying its truth,

swaying back and forth with this doctrine and the next

all while trying to explain an “infinite God” via our finite minds.

Last week we spoke of us being as the publican, in Luke 18, who asked for God to be merciful to him for he was a sinner – all the while, bowing his head in shame.

So, now we moved forward...

As we beg to God in the Collect this morning: to pour down upon us the abundance of His mercy,

asking not because of our “righteousness” and being sufficient of our ourselves (as did the Pharisee last week)

but because our sufficiency is of God.

And we now come to the Gospel reading today:

As Jesus is in a region known as Decapolis (between Tyre, Sidon, and Galilee) a non Jewish area ... yes, an area of those Gentiles...

– and we are told of the miracle of the healing of the deaf ... and ... the dumb.

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I suggested last week that we be like the publican, and now this week I suggest that **we are** like “the one” **who is** deaf and dumb.

All of us have much in common with this person - who could not hear and could not speak.

We have the capacity to hear and to speak, and - as we hear scripture, often we do not hear,

and when we speak – often - it is not of the Truth (a truth, which is as we discussed last week)

but we speak with a restricted tongue, often void of TRUTH.

This closure of ears and mouth, does not just depend upon just physical organs, but indicates an inner closure

which can cover the deepest part of a person, what the Bible calls “the heart.”

So it is Jesus: who opens and liberates our relationship with God –

Liberates us to WALK IN His Truth AND HIS WAYS –

a Liberation from death - which is sin –

and frees us to return to our original state – which was / and is / “good.”

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So, yes ... most of us are like this deaf and dumb person.

Often it seems as if it is we - who needs Jesus to touch us and maybe even “spit” upon us in order for us to be healed...

(ah – but do not worry my friends, He has done much better than “spit.”)

Pope Benedict XVI once said that the mission of Jesus Christ was summed up in the word that Jesus speaks this morning – the word Ephphatha – EF FA THA

which is Aramaic – meaning to “be opened.”

It has been suggested that the mission of Jesus Christ is “to open” our ears to the Truth of His Word,

Enabling each of us to become a voice which speaks the Truth and Love of God.

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So let me ask each of you this morning ...

what is blocking your spiritual ears from hearing the word of God?

Is it a prideful mind and heart that block Him out and leads you astray?

Is it the cynical world in which we live, which promotes the thought that religion makes you a slave to laws and commandments of another time?

Find whatever it is that interferes with your relationship with God

– throw whatever it is out of your life, because it is endangering your soul and distorting your relationship with God.

What causes our tongues to go dumb and prevents us from responding fully in True faith and True Love?

Is it a lack of courage, is it a lack of devotion to God, is it desiring to be popular and unwilling to be different?

Or is it the cynical world again in which we live that portrays religion as being something for the uneducated and ignorant?

Discover this weakness, whatever it is, and take it to God in prayer and ask Him to strengthened you and lead you.

*(Hey, just maybe – being in Church and receiving His sacraments often, and living a life within the body of His people (His Church) may be of help – just a thought....)*

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The fulfillment of prophecy (of miracles) in the Gospel,

is nothing more than the Creator revealing Himself to His Creation – mankind.

The prophecies in Isaiah (chapter 35) and Ezekiel (Chapter 24) are fulfilled by the only begotten Son of God...Jesus Christ.

**Our Faith**, or lack of it,

is of serious concern, requiring honest and serious meditation and reflection ...

do I walk with Jesus Christ or do I turn my back?

Do I give him my full heart, soul and mind, or just try to get by – giving only a “portion” here and there...and if so,

maybe He will not demand so much...

and make this Christian “thing” a little easier.

This question and its answer can become a scary situation,

because once we truly find Jesus - it **WILL** require difficult decisions to be made in our lives

as we open ourselves to almost anything.

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**Indeed**, difficult choices will follow – and for those of us in church today such questions could arise as:

should my family be in the Sunday School program beginning next Sunday, should my children and I be there (?), are we really hungry for the truth of our faith

(or, ... are ... we not?)

Am I “**fully prepared**” to receive and Take Jesus and His word out into the world

or do I need to prepare myself by participating in the Bible Study classes

(we have them day and night...)

Is this the year that I truly integrate into the body of St. Michael’s, my Church family ...

will I more fully participate in its activities which serves to bring Christ Church together, in love and support of each other,

or do I just go when it is convenient and when it fits into my schedule.

Do I need to evaluate my priorities: are they within God's Will or my Will?

When missing church – is it for something more important?

You see, when these kind of thoughts enter into our minds,

they can become scary, due to tough choices and difficult decisions: however....

We are told over and over in Scripture "FEAR NOT."

Once you are on the right path, these choices become easier and easier as you become "Opened" to His Word.

So I say to you this morning EPH PHA THA: EF FA THA

Let us proclaim together – EPH PHA THA....

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Let us: Be Opened to Jesus: **His words** are His message:

Be Opened to being strong in your faith, not wavering this way or that – but remaining solidly in its Truth

placing its importance above "**the stuff in your lives**" ...

Be Opened, yes open to **the giving of self** – in prayer and duty, of becoming more active within His Church at St. Michael's...

Be Opened to giving more time **in labor** and in prayer to Him, by participating in Morning and Evening Prayer and in our frequent Eucharist's,

pray at home with family members...

Be Opened to learning – open to the teachings of His Church within its Sunday School and Bible Study programs...

participate and grow spiritually within your family of and in Christ.

Be Opened to forgiveness - towards others - as reconciliation, not conflict, is sought...learn to forgive others as Christ forgives you.

Be Opened to His True Love, meaning a devotion to His words and examples allowing us to see and acknowledge His divine image in others;

thus motivating us, by our love of Christ, to respond accordingly with equal force and zeal to deplorable acts of sin...

Be Opened to helping others: by being strong, not forfeiting your faith in order to make others happy or pleased...

Be Opened to leaving the past behind – “let the dead bury the dead” –

Letting go of the things that are “dead to Christ” – things of which are contrary to him–

see **His Beauty**, desire and long for HIM - thus follow only – Jesus Christ ...

Be opened to Him and he will open your eyes, your ears, your mouths – **yes your Being**, in ways unknown to you...

Let the scales from your eyes fall to the ground and let His eternal spirit descend upon you ...

the more you “open” / the more He will give.

Be opened and ... you will begin to see a momentum in your life, giving you strength towards that PEACE which we all seek and desire.

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Come and receive His Body and His Blood –

humbly, confess your sins, and yes,

Be opened to His mystery

as He **forgives you** and **nourishes you**... with His Body and Blood...

He is opened and ready for you – are you, Opened to Him?

He awaits you with open arms – open your hearts and give yourself to Him

God has given us so much at St. Michael's –

it is truly **up to each one of you**

to “Be Opened” to what His Church offers...

Invite Him to take control of your life

Remove from your life things that are contrary to God,

Take charge of your life **by giving it to Him**...

He is the **“PERFECT FREEDOM”** for which we pray...

HE IS THE PERFECT GOD

HE IS YOUR GOD

BE THOU OPENED

HEAR AND SPEAK

LET US GO FORTH AND BRING CHRIST INTO EACH ONE OF **OUR OWN LITTLE**  
WORLDS

IT BEGINS WITH YOU...EPHPHATHA