

Pentecost 16 9/9/18
Mark 7:31-37 18B

OUR SERMON TEXT TODAY IS OUR GOSPEL LESSON FROM MARK'S GOSPEL, THE 7TH CHAPTER.

Why? You know that's my favorite question to ask you – why do we do what we do in the Lord's Church? Today, Sunday School starts. Why do we have Sunday School? Our Gospel lesson this morning answers that question for us.

Life in this present age all-too-often resembles "Alice in Wonderland". Lewis Carroll's delightful story begins with young Alice sitting, bored and sleepy, on a riverbank. Suddenly she sees a White Rabbit run by, wearing a waistcoat, carrying a watch, and talking about being late for a very important date. Alice gets up and runs after him, following him down a rabbit-hole, where she falls for a long time until she lands in a land in which the unreal is real. A rabbit not only runs on two legs like a human, but he is fully clothed and uses a watch to tell time. His speech is not only human, but quite strange. "Left" is "right" and "right" is "left"; "up" is "down" and "down" is "up". Alice finds herself in a land totally opposite of the land which she knew.

The death of sin means that our ears are closed to the voice and will of God. So, we find ourselves living in a world in which "evil" is called "good" and that which is "good" is called "evil".

So like Alice, we find ourselves in a strange world; a world exactly the opposite of what God wanted for His creation. In this strange world, that which is evil is called good. For example, abortion is "a choice"; homosexuality and other perversions are called "lifestyles"; and murder of the innocent and helpless is "compassion". Islam, a religion which teaches

that if you die a martyr, taking the life of an infidel, you have special rewards in the after life, is a religion of “peace” and Christianity, which teaches God loves all people, is called a religion of intolerance and bigotry. And, that which is good is called evil. For example, marriage is “oppression”; children are a “burden”; morality is “censorship”; law enforcement is “racism”; the Ten Commandments are “propaganda”; and the Bible is “hate speech”.

But, God has Good News for us who feebly struggle in this strange world, which is opposite the way God created it and wanted it to be. In the words of our Old Testament lesson, “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’ (Is 35:4).

The Good News of the Gospel is that God did come. In the words of our Old Testament lesson, the eyes of the blind were opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame leapt for joy, and the tongue of the mute shouted in joy. These miracles proved that the Messiah had truly come in Jesus of Nazareth.

Dear Friends, we rejoice, because the Good News of the Gospel is that as Jesus was willing to help the deaf man with a speech impediment in Decapolis, **JESUS IS WILLING TO HELP US AND WE REJOICE GREATLY THAT HE HAS HELPED US.**

Just as the deaf man with a speech impediment needed help, we need help. When Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden, we became the enemies of God. Our ears were closed to His words. And, our tongues did not speak the glory of our Almighty Creator. Just as that man in Decapolis needed Christ’s healing, we needed Christ’s healing. He needed physical

healing. We may have hearing and we may be able to speak, but all of us need spiritual healing. We need a Savior.

The Evangelist Mark records for us that before Jesus healed this man, "He sighed". Jesus sighed. His sighing is a sign for us to show us His great compassion, His great love, His great kindness, His great sympathy with our plight. Those precious words, "He sighed," show us how much our Savior truly does love us.

Jesus sighed because He loves you and me. He sighs that Satan has brought such ruin upon His creation. So that we would be forgiven and free, our Savior became the opposite of who and what He was. He of whom no sin was known took on all of our sin and carried that sin to the cross of Calvary. He the Righteous One became the chief of sinners. He, the very Son of God, was abandoned by His Father. He the Eternal Prince, died. That is the wages of our sin. But Good News for us is that by His death, He crushed the head of the evil foe and by His Easter resurrection, removed the sting death and the grave.

The Evangelist Mark notes that this man had infirmity of the two organs of the body, the tongue and the ears. One of our Lutheran Fathers commented on this that Mark points this out because it is these two organs of the body which separate Christians from unbelievers in this world. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ," Paul writes (Ro 10:17). Jesus says, "Everyone who confesses me before men, I also will confess him before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:32). And, the Bible also ways, "For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved" (Ro 10:10)."

As Jesus healed this man in Decapolis, He has healed us. In the new birth of our baptism, He opened our ears to His voice and loosed our

tongues. God gives us faith by the hearing of His words with our ears and we confess that faith with our lips.

Today marks the beginning of Sunday School for the family of Concordia. This Sunday emphasizes to us the need to teach God's Word to our children. "Make disciples of all nations," the Lord of the Church commanded, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Mt 28). We bring our children to the font of baptism that Jesus may open their ears to the hearing of His voice, and then we teach them His words of eternal life.

What makes it all the more dangerous for us in these last days is that "the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths" (2 Tim. 4:3). In these last days there are so many teachers that call evil, "good" and good, "evil".

"The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching." That pretty well describes life in this strange world in which evil is good and good is evil. The Prophet Jeremiah wrote well of this strange world in which we live, "They say continually to those who despise the Word of the LORD, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you'" (Jer 23:17).

If we are to resist the evil of the devil and the world, we must know the Word of God so that we can boldly and without fear say that is a lie when we hear a lie of the devil. We must hold fast to the Word of God, teaching it to our children, against the lies and myths of the false teachers, that we may be able properly to distinguish good from evil according to that

Word. Most importantly, we must hold fast to the true faith in Christ Jesus, that He may shepherd us through all the darkness of this present age, that we may take our place before Him and the throne of God so sing their praises forever and ever, without end.