

16 S. after Pentecost 9/8/24
Mark 7:31-37 18B

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

Selective hearing. Experts tell us that selective hearing is normal brain activity. But, I think it's fair to say, more often than not, selective hearing is more about what we want to hear, and not hearing what we don't want to hear. Wives, try talking to your husband when a football game is on. Parents, try telling your child it's time for chores or homework when they are playing video games. {And it won't be long now}, try telling your dog "Come," when they are on the trail of a pheasant and headed for Oliver county.

[MI] Dear Friends, we rejoice, because the Good News of the Gospel is that as Jesus was opened the ears of the deaf man with a speech impediment in Decapolis, Jesus has opened our ears so that we may hear His voice and follow Him through this darkness of the valley of the shadow of death.

I. Selective hearing. We all have it when it comes to hearing and learning God's Word. We are to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. Yah, right! Until what I want and what God wants for me are not the same thing. God says we are not to murder our neighbor, rather God wants us to forgive and live at peace with all men. Yah right! God better forgive me, but, BUT, it's perfectly fine for me to keep a record of my neighbor's wrongs and refuse to forgive. God tells us that we are to marriage is a good thing -- husband and wife love and honor each other. Yah right! Until my wandering eyes happen upon someone I covet for myself. God tells us to help our neighbor to improve and protect their

property and stuff. Yah right! How we delight when our neighbor gets theirs! God tells us to be content with the life and goods He has given us. Yah right! Until my neighbor gets a bigger or newer toy, than we are jealous and even bad mouth our neighbor, because everyone knows what a cheat and scoundrel he is anyway.

We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, the Bible says (Ro 8:28). Yah right! Flood waters, droughts, surgery, illness, troubles, worries, fears take our focus off Christ and His heaven to focus on ourselves, feel sorry for ourselves, and even be filled with self-pity that God doesn't care about me.

As far as the east is from the west, so far does [God] remove our transgressions from us, the Psalmist says (103:12). And He says this, *"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"* (Je 31:34). Yah right! We carry around a load of guilt and shame, and ask God to forgive me for that same sin I've already asked Him to forgive a hundred times.

We have selective hearing when it comes to God's Word and that is sin, and the *wages of sin is death* (Ro 6:23).

II. But, God has Good News for us. In the words of our Old Testament lesson, we hear through Isaiah, *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"* (35:4).

The Good News of the Gospel is that God did come. He came as the infant Son of Mary and Joseph; He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness; and He did the will of His Father.

The Evangelist Mark records for us that before Jesus healed this man, "He sighed". Jesus sighed. Yes, He sighed for this deaf and mute

man in Decapolis, but He also sighs for humanity, for you and for me. He sigh was a sigh for all ears and for all ears that have ignored God's Word since our parents first ignored His Word to eat of the forbidden fruit.

He knew that we could earn forgiveness. He knew that we could not satisfy God's anger. He knew that we could not save ourselves from death and the grave. So, He sighed and He carried our sin to the cross, where all of God's wrath against our sin was poured out on Him and His blood was shed so that we would be forgiven for our selective hearing and all our sins of thought, word, and deed. The Lord of Life died, but the 3rd day He rose again to win the victory over death and the grave for us.

And, He cares for us, just as He cared for the man in our lesson. Our Lutheran Fathers have pointed out that it is really these two organs of the body, the ears and the tongue, which separate Christians from unbelievers in this world. *Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ*, Paul writes (Ro 10:17). In the hearing of the Word with the water of our Baptism, Jesus opened our ears so that we may hear His voice and follow Him. Jesus says, *"Everyone who confesses me before men, I also will confess him before my Father who is in heaven (Mt 10:32)."* God gives us faith by the hearing of His words with our ears and we confess that faith with our lips.

The 3rd Commandment teaches us that we are to "hold God's Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it" because it is through His Word that God does His work in us. If it were up to us, we would demand a God of thunder and lightning; pillar of fire by night and cloud by day; the 90-foot, "giant" Jesus appearing to us on Highway 49 as He appeared on the road to Damascus. To be sure, God could work this way, but He has chosen not to. He has bound Himself to the means of grace, the Word – the spoken

Word and the visible Word of the Sacraments, where He joins His Word to water, bread, and wine.

Which is why we do not forsake meeting together in the worship services of God's House. Worship teaches us that God deals with us in grace, grace in Jesus. Worship is God's service to us. He works in us through His Word so that when we leave we really can follow the voice of Jesus and serve our neighbor. We come here, to church, empty, and tired, weak and weary, and through the hearing and learning of God's Word in worship, God forgives our sin, makes us **brave** to face the darkness in this valley of the shadow of death, gives us **patience** to live when the cross is very heavy; **joy** even when our earthly eyes fill with tears; **kindness** as we deal with our neighbor who seems to have more thorns than beauty; **peace** to live in world of upheaval and turmoil.

Today, we mark the beginning our Sunday School. This Sunday emphasizes to us the need to teach God's Word to our children, so that they will hear and learn the voice of Jesus in that Word. *"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 28:19-20). We bring our children to be made new and alive in Christ at the font of baptism and then we teach them God's Word, that the voice of their Good Shepherd will guide, comfort, and cheer them along life's way.

Which is important for children of all ages because as we live in the last days, *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. 4:3-4). Our itching ears give us selective hearing when it comes to

God's Word. We are deaf to it, while at the same time, it seems we listen with thirsty ear to the lies of the devil. The Christian life is the life of repentance and repentance is nothing more than a daily return to the waters of our baptism. Every day we return to the waters of our baptism in repentance that we may die to sin and rise to live in Jesus.

"Be opened," Jesus has spoken. He has opened our ears to hear His voice, that we may follow Him in the way that leads to eternal life.