

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Our Lord healed the man. And then He commanded them that they should tell no one. But Isaiah was under no such command. Quite the contrary. Seven centuries before the birth of the Christ, by God's command Isaiah prophesied that a day would come when the deaf would hear, and the blind would see. He promised a Savior. And there, in Galilee, as that stammering man's tongue was loosed, as that deaf man's ears were unstopped, did that blessed, long awaited Day come.

Deafness and blindness are clear, outward signs of man's corruption. There were no deaf men in Eden. There was no blindness. There were no speech impediments either. These afflictions, like disease and lust, war and hatred, sloth and gluttony, pride and envy, are the consequence of the fall of man. So men die. Sin perverted the creation that God declared "very good." The world around you is a gruesome distortion of what God once made. But in His grace, the Lord that made heaven and earth sent the prophet Isaiah to promise a new creation.

But the deaf man that stood before our Lord was of the fallen creation. He could not speak aright. His impediment was part and parcel of his deafness. The one who cannot hear cannot learn to speak clearly. So it is with you. The devil, working through your fallen flesh, stopped your ears by filling them with his lies. The Word of God could not work, for unbelief is deaf to the truth. Unable to hear, you could not then rightly speak of God, which is to say that you could not confess Him. He who cannot confess cannot be saved. And it is that man, the fallen sinner, that tries to justify his sinful thoughts, words and deeds.

So fallen men are quite comfortable in this deteriorating world. Like a den of thieves, men use the sins of others to minimize or justify their own. When we see the mayor of the city arrested and imprisoned for malfeasance, it makes our wrongdoings seem a little more acceptable. When we know that the police are busy dealing with violent crimes, we are more apt to drive five miles over the limit. When captains of industry are jailed for theft, it makes our day-to-day dishonesties seem acceptable. When presidents and pastors break their marriage vows, our lusts and secret thoughts seem much less harmful. But of course they are not any less harmful. They are external signs of spiritual death.

God, however, is not swayed by our rationalizations. Hell is full of the souls of deaf and blind men that explained away their bad behavior. But there is still room sufficient in that smoldering den of thieves. Repent.

But take heart. For by the Spirit of God the Prophet preached: "In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the blind shall see... The cure God sent through the Prophet was hearing the Words of the Book – hearing the Law preached in its severity, hearing the Gospel preached in its sweetness.

For on the cross, the Christ who healed the deaf man endured Himself the impediment of speech caused by parched lips, as His strength was dried up like a potsherd; as His tongue clove to His jaws. There were His perfect and holy ears made deaf by the cries of "crucify, crucify". He was

made deaf as He was brought into the dust of death, as the life drained from His sinless Body, as His ears were stopped by death.

But He is the God that hears and sees. Death could not hold Him. On the third day was that blessed tongue loosed to proclaim His victory over sin and death. On Easter morn were those loving ears opened to hear the prayers of His Church.

God, in His great love for you, did more than heal your ears. He did more than heal your heart. He slew them with the piercing Word of His Law. Then He drowned them in the Flood that destroys the fallen creation, and creates anew – the Flood of Holy Baptism. For the ministry of death was external, condemning that which lay inside of man. But the ministry of the Spirit is His indwelling, His filling of the redeemed, God in us.

By the power of His Triune Name He created anew your ears and your heart, and opened them by saving Word of the Holy Gospel, bringing through your ears and to your heart the forgiveness Christ won for you on the Cross, and the righteousness that flows from His glorious resurrection.

So now, by His grace, ears of faith unstopped, you hear aright. For you hear God's Holy Word. And hearing, by the indwelling of the Spirit, your lips are healed to rightly confess Christ, which is the fruit of faith. And the Words of the Prophet are fulfilled as you hear and confess, as the humble increase *their* joy in the LORD, And the poor among men rejoice In the Holy One of Israel, even Jesus Christ your Savior.

And this day the same Christ who placed His fingers in the ears of the deaf man and touched His tongue takes you apart from the multitude to His altar, and places His Body on your tongue. He fills your ears with His Word and He fills your heart with faith. Receiving, you proclaim His death until He comes. So you believe and confess and are saved, for with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

You, dear Christian, redeemed of Christ, are made part of the new creation, the holy, perfect, new heaven and earth that will be ushered in on the Day your Lord returns. Thanks be to God, He has done all things well.

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