

## “Be Transformed”

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Have any of you known someone who'd deaf or mute? Have you ever encountered someone with whom you couldn't communicate? Have you ever met anyone who spoke a different language? How did you feel? Inadequate? Incompetent?

Open again to the Gospel in Mark 7. This story has some strong implications for the people in the story and for us. Martin Luther said about this text: *“Now you here observe the nature of faith which grows out of the word. For the Word first sets forth to us the mercy and goodness of God; then faith causes us to cleave unto it with a firm confidence, and to obey the Word.”*

Verses 32-34, *“And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”* When Jesus is present, even a hopeless situation can turn into a joyful event!

Many times we find ourselves in a situation just like the man in the story. When we go out on our own we come to realize that we're there without Jesus. When we're without Him, **We're Deaf!** We miss what He's trying to tell us, especially in His Word, because we're just not listening! We get so caught up in ourselves and what the world is saying, we don't take the time to see what Jesus says.

**We're Mute!** Because we don't take the time to gain from God's Word and put it in practice, we get into situations where we know the Word, but we don't say anything about what we know. Sometimes, it's because we don't feel we know enough, or don't know if it's the right thing to say, or worried that what we say won't be accepted by the person who hears. We're afraid that they might judge us or persecute us, so we refuse to take a stand!

**We're Blind!** We don't see the value in Jesus so we don't take the time or energy to worship Him. People visit us here for all kinds of reasons. Some, like spectators, come only when something unique or special is about to happen and they don't want to miss. Some approach the Lord as if He were a lifeguard at the beach, largely unnoticed and not wanted, unless of course they begin to drown in life's troubles.

We sometimes follow the same pattern. We turn our backs on those that just aren't like us and maybe make us feel uncomfortable. So we struggle with friendships, marriages, and relationships! It all ends up in the same spot, **We're Lost!** Sin is a big part of this. As we follow patterns of the world, we get involved in the same patterns and normally that's going against what God commands. This causes us guilt and confusion and because we're trying to do all of this on our own, we don't know what to do or when to do it at all!

Look at verses 35-37, *“And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”* This man came to Jesus to be healed, and the power of the Son of God didn't disappoint and still doesn't disappoint you when you turn to Him!

Open to Colossians 3. It's time to realize that with Jesus in our lives things change. As God's people, **We're Chosen!** We're special in His sight and He calls us His own in the waters of

Baptism. Look at Verses 12-14, *"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."*

**We're Hearing!** We're here today and every day in devotions to praise our God and to be hearers of God's Word! As we hear the Word, we hear life and faith. Romans 10:17, *"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."*

**We're Free!** Because of what Jesus has done, you're no longer in the prison of your sin. To free you from the sin of that pins you down, He let His own body be pinned down by iron spikes to a rough piece of wood. He chose to let himself be pinned down so you could be free.

Why did He do it? It was the only way for heaven to be opened for you. Through His sacrifice on the cross, the doors of heaven that were locked have been swung wide open! It's the body and blood we see hanging on the cross on Good Friday, that's the very same Body and Blood offered here today in the Lord's Supper!

**We're Servants!** In Sweden, a woman was injured as she rushed to catch a streetcar. She stumbled in front of the moving car and was caught beneath it. The police sent for a crane to lift the heavy streetcar off her body.

While waiting for the crane, a crowd of people gathered. One man pushed through the crowd, crawled beneath the car, and said to the woman, *"Take my hand."* As she took his hand she felt the nearness and warmth of the stranger. This calmed her and prevented her from going into shock.

After the crane arrived and the woman was released, she said, *"I never thought an outstretched hand could mean so much."* Our outstretched hand can mean a lot to someone who's in need, and that's why God called us to be His servants. We're to be Jesus to everyone around us!

**We're Transformed!** Jesus healed a deaf mute by taking him aside, touching him, and speaking a command to *'be opened'*. He does the same with you! He gets personal with you! He touches you, in His Word and Sacraments and *'opens'* you. And you're unstuck! He opens you to Himself, and when you're open to Him, you become open to each other, to those around you, to those in need, to the whole world. You become a vessel through which His love flows. You're truly Transformed!