

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

On earth men do not see clearly. Sin clouds their vision. Nor do they hear aright. Their speech is impeded. We are fallen. And so we meet the Galilean man – deaf, with an impediment of speech. But it will not be so in heaven. In heaven we will be perfect. So in the vision of heaven granted to St. John, he saw clearly.

In that Revelation there is only One who is worthy to open and to close. In the Divine Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia, the only One who is Holy and True, the One who holds the Key of David, is the One who opens and no one shuts, and who shuts and no one opens. To the faithful in Philadelphia He opens – He sets before them an open door the Way of Salvation.

So too in that Divine Vision does the strong angel ask the Disciple whom Jesus loved “Who is worthy to open the scroll and loose its seals?” For the One seated at the Right Hand of the throne in heaven held a scroll with seven seals. The Evangelist wept, for no one was found worthy to open the seals. But thanks be to God, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals, unveiling the prophecy of the coming age and the end of all things.

So the saints in heaven sang to the Lamb "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation..."

He, the Lamb who was slain, the One who redeems us to God by His Blood, He alone has the power to open and the power to shut. And St. Mark records that the same Lamb, the Lamb of God, the same One who is Holy and True, the One who holds the Key of David, the One seated at the Right Hand of the throne in heaven, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, stood in the Flesh in the Galilean dust before the deaf and mute man.

And He who alone has the power to open and to shut, looked up to heaven and said “Ephphatha!”, that is “Be opened!” He alone is worthy to open that which is closed, and to close that which is open. Isaiah promised it. Seven centuries before by Divine inspiration the Prophet promised “In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.”

Sin had closed the mouth and the ears of that Galilean man in a way that no one could open them. That doesn't mean that his affliction was punishment for a specific sin. God doesn't work that way. But there was no deafness in Eden. And there will be no deafness in heaven.

Deafness, the inability to speak, deformities, sickness, epidemics, pandemics, hatred, violence and death are the things of this fallen world, things wrought by the fall of man, things wrought by the sin we each inherit at conception. But thanks be to God, the Lord who made all things has promised a New Creation.

At the Parousia, at the Coming of our Lord in Glory on the Last Day, after the Judgment, God has promised to make all things new. So what the deaf man experienced was simply a taste of the New Creation. For where sinful man is, there is perversion and death. Where God is, there

is healing and forgiveness and life. Only the Mastercraftsman, the One through whom all things were made, the One at the Father's side through whom the beasts of the field were spoken into being and the first man was formed from the dust of the earth, only He can truly heal His creation.

It was a miracle. And it is an inspiring account. But the Scriptures are more than dusty pages chronicling ancient happenings. The Scriptures are living and active. What the Lord did to that Galilean man He does for you. You may not think of yourself as having been deaf, or of having an impediment of speech.

But indeed you were. You were deaf to the Word of God. And you were unable to confess Christ with your lips. For you were conceived in the same sin as that Galilean deaf man. And being born sinful, you expressed your sinfulness in your thoughts, words and deeds. The sinner is more than deaf and mute. The Scriptures teach us that the sinner is dead in his transgressions. And so it was with you. So it is with all fallen men.

For of sinners the Prophet writes "the terrible one is brought to nothing, the scornful one is consumed, and all who watch for iniquity are cut off..."

But with a Word, Mary's Son and Mary's Lord opened what had been closed. He opened that deaf man's ears. With a Word, He loosed His tongue. And with a Word, the same Christ proclaimed you sinless and holy. He proclaimed you alive. He proclaimed you forgiven. He proclaimed you reconciled to God. That living and active Proclamation, that sharp two-edged life-giving Word, is the Holy Gospel – the Truth that man is justified by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, by the grace of God alone.

For His Word, and His Word alone, the Word that was with God in the beginning, brings what the Gospel promises. His Word brings you His perfect, faithful suffering and His atoning death. His Word works in you the same miraculous creative work as that Word worked at the first. For by His Word God makes you a new creature, as His Triune Name is proclaimed over you and scribed onto your forehead and your breast.

By His Triune Name and Word of Promise you drown in the flood of the font, and emerge alive, drawn out of the saving waters, the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, as you die with Christ and rise with Him to new life by the power of the Spirit of the Living God.

It is The Holy One of Israel, Lord of the Prophets, the slain and risen Lamb that sits on the throne, that alone is worthy to open that which is closed. So the Apostle born out of due time writes "We have such trust through Christ toward God: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

By touching the deaf man's ears, the Lord made him a silent promise of healing. By spitting and then touching His tongue, He showed Himself to be the One who brought forth the creation from the waters with a word. He looked up to heaven, God the Son in His state of humiliation commending all things into His Father's hands. He looked up to heaven, promising that His

healing opens heaven to men. “Ephphatha”, “Be opened.”

So does He open your heart to receive Christ. So does He open your ears to the Saving Gospel, to be astonished beyond measure at His mercy towards you, to greatly marvel at His love and grace. And so does He loose your tongue to confess Him as God and Lord. And so, by His Word, so, by His Blood, so by the forgiveness of your sins, does He who alone is worthy open what was closed open heaven to you.

This day He gives you to taste of that heaven as He places His Body in your mouth and streams His Blood across your lips. The Christ that touched the ears of the deaf man touches you as His Body enters you. The Christ that looked up to heaven is the same Christ that gave thanks and broke the Bread He makes His Body, and who gave thanks and gave His Blood for the life of the world.

And that looking up is a promise for you – you have a place in that heavenly throne room around the Lamb who is alone worthy. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. So take and eat, take and drink dear Christian. Thanks be to God, “He has done all things well.

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