

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

David was king, the most powerful man in the country. But he felt helpless. He prayed “Make haste O God to deliver me, make haste to help me O Lord...” He prayed in the throes of tribulation. His heartfelt anguish can still be heard in his Words: “I am poor and needy; Make haste to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay. “

But David is not alone. Perhaps you too have known affliction that drove you to pray “I am poor and needy, make haste to help me, O God!” Perhaps you have felt the helplessness, the loneliness, the despair of a situation that seems to be out of your control, an affliction or an attack that threatens your wellbeing. Perhaps you have known what it is to be truly afraid, without comfort, without help.

Then the account of the man who was double-afflicted, the deaf man with the impediment of speech, the account of that helpless man, is an account in which you can find comfort and hope. St. Mark records that the man didn't come to Jesus. He was brought to Jesus. St. Mark paints a pitiful picture – a severely afflicted man that men couldn't help. But so it has been with each of us.

Each of us has been helpless. Each of us has been deaf, and unable to speak. St. Paul writes of the Law which points to our helplessness to save ourselves, our deafness to God's Word, our inability to speak aright a saving confession of faith. Those stony tablets scribed by the finger of God held the letter that kills, the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of death.

For in sin, all men are prevented from hearing God's Word, all men are prevented from confessing the Truth of Holy Scripture. Instead men craft their own truths, which are no truths at all. They craft their own religions, which are false religions of false Gods. Men craft their own laws, their own morals, their own mores, which are proved false when they change in every generation. And men invent their own confessions, which are fluid and shifting, and glorify the morals and mores of the zeitgeist of the day.

But the True God is not like that. Right worship of the True God is not like that. The Word of God does not change. The Truth never changes. And the Law is right there, doing what the Law was given to do – accuse the sinner, point out your transgressions, your trespasses, your insufficiencies, your doubts, your sin. So, the Apostle teaches, the letter condemns. It kills. *Lex semper accusat*. It lays bare the sin that merits death. But while the letter kills, the Spirit gives life. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.

So hearken then, O Redeemed of Christ. Hear aright. For the account of the deaf man is for you. Christ Jesus healed Him. And the same Lord heals you. He heals you with a touch, as water comprehended with His Word touches you, washes you. He heals you with that which proceeds from His mouth – His Holy Word, the Word of Life and Salvation, as the Triune Name and the Gospel Promise are spoken to you.

For of old it was 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. The humble also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. “ True hearing is

hearing the Word of the Book – the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God. True seeing is to see the Light, Christ, the Light of the World, who brings men out of obscurity and darkness.

Hearing God's Word, seeing Christ, you need not despair, you need not be afraid. Christ heals you. He alone can truly deliver you, He alone can truly help you. He alone can bring the terrible one to nothing. By Him is the scornful one consumed, and those who watch for iniquity are cut off. In that way He protects and keeps His Church, so that you, O Baptized of Christ, can hear His Word, see the Light that alone gives life, and remain steadfast in your baptismal faith.

That faith is trust in God, trust in Christ. So what the Apostle writes is true of you: 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. And St. Paul writes of the Pastoral Office, the Office through which God's Gifts, His Mysteries, are brought to the Church: that God has 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. And that life-giving Spirit, the Holy Spirit, fills you.

The Lord took the deaf and mute man aside from the multitude to heal him. And so this day has He taken you aside, out of the fallen, dying world, and brought you into His Church, this place where He has promised to heal you. He could have simply proclaimed the man healed, and he would have been healed. Indeed, He could have done it from afar.

But the Lord took the man aside, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. God has fingers. God has a mouth. God took on Flesh to redeem you. The Christian faith is an incarnational faith. He heals your soul, He fills you with His Spirit, and on the Last Day He will transform your body, and you will receive a perfect, heavenly body.

After He touched the man, He looked up to heaven. The man could neither hear nor speak, but he could see. He saw what the Lord did. By His actions the Lord preached a kinetic sermon to him. He looked up, because the man's help came from above. And then He sighed, and proclaimed the man healed.

And so too, on the night when He was betrayed, taking the Bread, did He give thanks. With full knowledge that scourge and cross lay just ahead, He gave thanks to God the Father. And the Twelve saw what He did. His Words and actions were in perfect concert.

That Thanksgiving, and His speaking of the Words of Institution, bring you a "touch" from the Lord who heals you this day, as the same Christ touches you when the Bread which is His Body is placed into your mouth, and Wine which is His Blood touches your lips and fills your soul.

The Lord, in His mercy, in His great love for you, has granted you a better healing: the salvation of your soul. And you rejoice, and join the awe-struck crowd in saying, "He has done all things well." He died for you. He rose from the dead for you. He has redeemed you. He has saved you. He has won the forgiveness of all your sins. He causes you to hear His Word, to receive His Spirit, to believe with your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord. And into that same mouth He places His Body and Blood. Thanks be to God, He does all things well.

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