**God’s Gifts Restored**

Based on [Mark 7:31-37](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mk7.31-37)

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Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

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Today’s gospel is the account of the Lord, Jesus Christ graciously restoring a man’s hearing and speech. **The plain teaching of the text is in the words of the astonished spectators who said of Jesus after the healing, “He has done all things well.** He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.” Jesus worked this and other such miracles serving as signs that he is the messiah, the Christ, who has come to free people from their enemies.

Do you have enemies? In Jesus’ day, the Jews thought their greatest enemies were the Romans. Maybe today you oppose the liberal or conservative government. You might have family you don’t get along with or co workers. **You also have inanimate enemies, such as high gas prices, forest fires, cancer and disease**. We can pray about these things and God will hear our prayers. But our greatest enemies are summed up in the three spiritual enemies of God and man sin, death and the devil. And Jesus’ healing miracles are all about conquering death through healing and life.

Death is often animated and personified in culture. The grim reaper is talked about in many mythologies. Attired in a robe with a hood-hidden face and brandishing a sickle for the harvesting of souls he comes as the agent of death, called death himself. **But aside from such fiction, there is apparent biblical truth to talking about death as a person.** The angel of death is mentioned several times in the Old Testament. And in the book of Hebrews mentions him as the one who carried out the death sentence on the firstborn sons of the Egyptians and passed over the Israelite homes. St. Paul says that death is the enemy, the last enemy to be defeated in fact at the second coming of Christ. He also talks to death and mocks death as you would taunt an adversary saying, “O death where is your victory, O death where is your sting?”

In any case, death itself is not a person though God may send an agent to carry it out. **Death is a separation. Spiritually it is a separation from the God in his grace and mercy, this is what is called the second death for the damned in Revelation.** Physically, for us, it is the separation of the body from the soul. And so it is important to understand Jesus’ healing miracles as an undoing of death.

We are some 300 years into the age of enlightenment; when mankind began to discover with great mathematical precision the laws of nature. **And out of this understanding bore much technological advancement, including advancement in medicine and the treatment of diseases.** We have split the atom, mapped the genome, cured polio and some other diseases, but we have not come any closer to curing death. Once your dead, really dead, three days in the tomb type dead—you’re dead. And no amount of knowledge of the things of this world will be able to undo death.

And your senses can die, be separated from your soul. Blind eyes are dead eyes. A paralyzed limb is a dead limb. Deaf ears are dead ears and technology still cannot undo such death. But Jesus Christ, 2000 years ago had the technology**. Or rather he had the teaching. He said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”** And Jesus did not only expect us to believe this on his word, he showed us by raising Lazarus from the tomb after four days and decaying. And on the third day after his own death, Jesus was raised from the dead just like he said. Because his righteous body and his atoning blood are the cure for death and the medicine of immortality for all who believe.

*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.* ***33****And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue.* ***34****And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”* ***35****And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.*

Hearing, like all the senses, are gifts from God. And once the when they are gone, they are dead. You may have many enemies and anxieties in this life, but truth be told, if you woke up tomorrow deaf or blind, you would I wager forget most of your other problems. **This is because you are a sinner, and you tend to take for granted the things God has already given you out of his abundant mercy, and spend your time coveting more than he has granted.** Your hearing is a gift coming down from the Father of Lights. Enemies can take it away, but only God can heal it, because he was the only one who gave life to your body in the first place. Don’t fear the one who can cause your death; fear trust and love the one who gives life. If he gave it once, he can give it again; even should your sin squander it; even should the devil threaten it; nothing can prevent God from restoring it to you, here in time should it be his will, or there in eternity should you believe in the one he has sent.

God has given you your senses, use them honorably and keep them pure. **Your eyes are gifts of from the Lord, keep them clean. Jesus said, “The eye is the lamp of the body.** So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. So devote your eyes to pure things, and do not delight in looking upon what is evil.

Your body is a gift of the Lord, devote it to holiness and acts of mercy and love. **Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness**, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Your speech is a gift from God, use it to build up and to speak plainly what is true. **The tongue is a fire, world of unrighteousness. With it you can bless God and curse your neighbor made in His likeness**. But you have been sanctified by His Spirit who is at work in you. By the spirit who is in you, tame your tongue to speak what is pleasant in His sight.

Your ears are a gift from God, that can be taken away. While you can hear, devote your ears to listen to what is right and good for the soul. Just as Christ baptized the deaf mans’ ears and tongu with his spittle, so he baptized you with the washing of water and the word, giving you the capacity to hear and understand spiritual truths. Hear the preaching of God’s word, that you may enjoy his salvation. Do not listen to gossip or slander. Do not fill your ears with idle doctrines, false teachings and vain hopes of this world. This world is wasting away and everything in it. Listen to hear about the things that are not seen, but perceived through faith alone, and God will give you understanding.

Your body is not your own not your own, but was bought at a price. So honor God in your body with your short time here.  **And he will reward you with a crown of righteousness through Jesus Christ, and prepare you for a weight of glory that is beyond all comparison. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.** Though your circumstances may change from day today, he is eternal life and promises it to you who would perish, but for his precious body and blood. Receive them today as a gift, and know that whatever you lose in this life will be restored a hundred-fold at the resurrection of the just…and rest assured in this peace that surpasses all understanding.