

Saint Thomas of the Air Church  
Trinity XII  
August 22, 2021  
rmcneely+

ephphatha . . . be opened

*Ephphatha*, the Aramaic word spoken by Jesus as He healed deafness and muteness.

Be Opened.

Fulfilling the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel  
Today, St Paul writes to the church he founded in Corinth  
and explains how the New Covenant  
is superior to the Old One.

Paul recognizes the value and importance of the Old Covenant  
As the transitory means by which we reach  
The New Covenant.

He recalls the promise to Abraham  
manifested in the stone tablets  
containing the 10 Commandments  
given to Moses.

The laws, carved in stone, that guide us still today  
But were only words that defined behavior  
And like all laws, they delineated right from wrong,  
But do not have the power to bring about obedience.  
Or to absolve our sins.

Paul recalls the Exodus account of Moses returning from Mt. Sinai  
So radiating the glory of God  
That he was painful to look upon  
And the Jews demanded that he be veiled  
To block the glory of God.

Centuries later the Children of God even installed a huge veil  
in the Temple at Jerusalem,  
To separate themselves from the Holy of Holies

That sacred portion of the Temple containing  
the Ark of the Covenant.  
Was the Temple veil a remnant of the veil of Moses?  
separating His people from God?

Recall that at the instant Jesus died on the cross at Calvary  
That huge veil hanging in the Temple  
Was torn in two.  
The veil that separated the people of God  
from God  
Was no more.

Does that veil exist today?  
Has it blocked our hearing  
And stifled our speech?  
Have we become the deaf and mute man from today's Gospel?

Has the modern movement to secularize our Society  
Made us deaf  
To the word of God,  
To the sound of His voice  
To the message of His Love?  
Have we, in the guise of "tolerance"  
Had our voices removed  
And lost the ability to freely speak the word of God?

Has the removal of God from public spaces  
From the halls of government, from the courts  
From schools  
Even from polite conversation  
Woven a new veil  
Concealing the truth  
The Love of God  
Because the secularists cannot bear the glory  
The edifying light; the reflection of God in their lives?

Without that love shining brightly in our lives

In our society

In our world

What has happened?

Without the Love of God

What is loose in our world?

What is free to infect us?

What overcomes us?

What is behind the unrest in our Country

The civil and

Criminal distress so prevalent in the news of the day?

What has inflamed the hearts of many

And incited some to violence?

How has violence and crime,

Wanton destruction of public and private property

become condoned as a Constitutional right and

a form of legitimate protest?

What is behind the Iranian wars waged in

Afghanistan,

Iraq,

Yemen

Syria, Saudi Arabia and Israel?

Of all the forces at work in our Country and in our world today

Working to divide us

Working to infect us with hate

Ignorance

And violence

There is only one force at work today to bring us together

The Christian Church

It is only in the Houses of God  
Such as this little miracle church  
An oasis of God's love  
In a sectarian desert of hate  
That stands for the love of God.

But what has deafened us to God's message?  
What has muffled our speech  
and ability to freely communicate  
His gospel, the good news of His mercy?  
What is the source of our reluctance?

Is it that veil,  
Covering the reflected glory of God in our lives?  
That veil separating us from the love of God,  
That has loosed hatred among us?

Has the veil been woven so tightly that our Bishops  
Must remind us of the words we pray at every mass  
Remind us of the Commandments of Jesus  
Love one another as I have loved you?

Once God's love is removed from our lives  
The vacuum it leaves draws first ignorance  
and then hatred, and  
Ignorance and hatred breed fear  
and fear breeds anger.  
And anger breeds violence.

Hatred focused upon one part of us  
Only breeds hatred back against the other.  
And so the cycle continues.  
Violence begets counter-violence  
We become divided when we lose sight of God.

When we can no longer hear the word of God,  
 When we can no longer speak the word of God,  
 When we can no longer spread the Love of God,  
 When that veil blocks our hearing  
 and garbles our speech;  
 The devil has scored his win.

In St Mark's account of Jesus healing the deaf and mute man,  
 Jesus quietly and privately opens the man to the world  
 He looks to Heaven, His Father and He says:  
 "Ephphatha" . . . Be opened.

He "unstops" his ears,  
 And lets loose the string  
 that garbled the man's speech.

With a single word;; Jesus  
 Removes the veil from the man's life.  
 Restores him to the world  
 Returns him to a life with sound  
 To hear the word of God  
 And to speak the word of God.

He will do the same for us.

We must go to the Him in prayer  
 Prayer such as today's ancient Collect.  
 Seeking the abundant mercy of God  
 The good things of which we are not worthy to ask.  
 Forgiveness for that which our conscience is afraid.  
 Seeking more than we deserve.

Seeking the removal of the veil from our lives.  
 Seeking the restoration of God's love to the world.

That love will work wonders.  
In our lives  
In the lives of our Countrymen and women  
And in the lives of the world.

Love is the only antidote to hate.  
Jesus showed us how it is done.

Even as he hung bleeding in agony on the cross  
As His strength was leaving Him  
With one of His last breaths  
He sought forgiveness for His torturers.  
Not vengeance,  
Not violence  
Not anger or hatred  
Christian love.

Let us all be opened to Him  
Let Him in.  
Let Him into our lives  
Into our hearts.

Eph pha tha. Be Opened.

