

Saint Thomas of the Air Church
 Trinity XII
 August 27, 2023
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ephphatha . . . be opened

Ephphatha, the Aramaic word Jesus spoke as He
 Restored hearing and speech to a deaf and mute man.
 Be Opened.
 Fulfilling the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel.
 In today's epistle, St Paul writes to the church
 he founded in Corinth
 and extols the New Covenant
 as 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. Jesus.

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 metaphorically 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,
Deaf to the sound of His voice
Deaf 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
The rampaging riots and Criminal distress
so prevalent in the news not so long ago?
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?
What is behind the savage Russian attack on the people of
Ukraine?

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, the Church of Jesus Christ.

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 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.

