

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Twelfth Sunday after Trinity
August 23, 2026
rmcneely+

ephphatha. . . be opened.

St Mark presents today's Gospel:

The story of a healing.

Healing of a man who could neither hear nor speak.

Jesus healed a lot of people during His 3 year ministry,

But Mark saw something of significance in this story.

Let's see if we can figure out why.

First, the geography is significant for a couple of reasons.

It takes place in Decapolis.

A large area east of the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea
Where Jordan is today.

Mark reports that earlier, Jesus was on the coast near Tyre and
Sidon (present day Lebanon) casting out a devil

From the daughter of a Canaanite woman.

So Jesus had walked some 100 miles from the coast of the
Mediterranean, the western most point of His ministry to
Decapolis, the eastern most point of His travels.

This path marks a change.

Up to now, Jesus had walked the Holy Land through Galilee and
Judea.

He gave sermons and healed the sick

He demonstrated who He was with miracles.

But with the healing of the man in today's story,
there marked a change.

Let's go back a few months to the date we mark as the Transfiguration.

The mysterious time when Peter, James and John
Followed Jesus up a mountain,
there to witness a strange and wonderful event.
Jesus appeared with Moses and Elijah, the law and the prophets
And was gloried and transfigured
In preparation for what was to come;
the climactic events of Jerusalem and Calvary.

He was now ready to fulfill the mission God sent Him to accomplish.

The journey to Decapolis was the pivot point in His journey.
From there He turned
and inexorably faced Jerusalem
and his crucifixion and resurrection some 6 months hence.

The other significant thing about the geography
Was that Decapolis was not the home of Jews.
The people there, just as in Tyre and Sidon
Were gentiles.

It was a radical notion in its time
But Jesus was not the exclusive property of the Jews
He was the Saviour of all Mankind.

Let's leave the geography and consider the healing itself.

Put yourself in the deaf and mute man's sandals for a moment:
The man's friends gather him up and present him to Jesus.
Perhaps pushing him along.

Can you imagine what he must have thought.

He could not hear what was being said,
but could see that he was being brought to this
man he did not know,
for a reason that he could not know.
Was he being accused of something?
Does some arrest or prosecution await him?

Without being able to hear their words,
the man can make no sense of what they are doing
or why.

And without a voice, he could not shout his fear.

In most of the other accounts of His healings,
Jesus usually healed people by speaking the word
or by placing his hand on them.

Not so here.

He placed his fingers in the man's ears,
spit
and placed His finger on the man's tongue.

He sighed,

looked up to heaven

and said in his native Aramaic language

“Ephphatha” . . . “Be Opened”.

That was the first word that the deaf man ever heard, Ephphatha.
Spoken by no less than the Son of God.

Jesus restored the man's hearing

so that he could receive the sound of the world,

So he could hear the Word of God;

(catch the double meaning: the Word of God is scripture
and the Word is also Jesus as described in John's Gospel)

So the man hears the Word of God from the Word of God.

But note, once Jesus restored the man's hearing; He didn't stop
there.

Jesus restored his voice so that the man could speak the Word of God,

give it away to others.

The blessing was not in the gift of hearing, but in the giving what he heard to others with his voice.

St Mark tells us of one of the immediate impacts of this healing.

The people were beyond measure astonished;

They said He had done all things well.

Unlike people of today,

the Jews knew their Bible,

and knew that the prophets Isaiah

and Ezekiel and others had said the Messiah

would make the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak;

Jesus had fulfilled the prophesy.

The Jews had to wonder whether the Messiah had finally come.

Can we help but wonder how the formerly deaf mute spent the rest of his life.

What he must have thought

when he heard (now that he could hear)

that his healer had been crucified,

but had returned from the dead.

Now that he could speak, what must he have said of the man who had restored him to the world?

But what of us?

We live in a time that some want to be known as,

the “post” Christian era.

As if Christianity and its influence has passed away.

Secularists seek to eradicate

all vestiges and reminders of God from our lives.

They seek to remove all reference and symbols of Him
 From the public square.
 Our public schools and universities
 teach atheism and scorn Christianity to our children as
 unenlightened,
 unscientific
 unintellectual

It seems that our faith is challenged on a daily basis.
 If it was ever easy to be a Christian,
 with all the criticism, controversy and cynicism,
 it is not easy now.

Through it all: Have we become deafened?
 Have we become muted?
 Have we become the Gentile deaf and dumb man in St Mark's
 story?
 Do we need our Lord's healing,
 His fingers in our ears and on our tongue?

Ephphatha . . . Be opened.

Today's Collect petitions God to pour down upon us
 the abundance of His Mercy,
 Forgiving those things whereof our conscience
 is afraid to ask.

Be open to His answer to our prayer.
 Be open to his mercy and forgiveness.

Be opened to Him:

Accept Him:

Let Him in to our lives
 Let Him place His fingers in our ears that we may clearly
 hear the Word of God
 Let Him touch our hearts that we may know the love of God
 The Peace of God

Be opened to Him

Every time we receive Him in Communion at the altar,
receive Him and be opened

Every time we go to Him in our private prayers,

Every time we pray the Daily offices

Be opened to Him and just as the sound waves that
reach your mind,

let Him in to your heart and soul in prayer.

But that is only the first part.

We are Christians.

The Grace of God, is not something we receive

That it can be bottled up inside us
to selfishly consume.

We must “Be opened” to express the Word of God in our lives:: to
let it out:

He has loosed our tongues

He has freed our hearts

We must give voice to the Word of God

Here at St Thomas

And out there in our lives.

In today’s Epistle, St Paul reminds us that our qualification is by
God.

Who has made us all ministers of the New Testament,
The New Covenant with Him.

A covenant not in letters carved in stone

But of the spirit written on our hearts.

Paul does not condemn the letter of the law

He points out that it only increases the consciousness of guilt

And thus kills hope of attaining righteousness.

The New Covenant brings not only remission of guilt
But the inwardly working power of the Spirit
Making us truly sufficient
unto the calling and demands of God.
We are ministers of God.

Be opened and He will let you know His will
Let us Be Opened and express his Word in our lives

Be not afraid to speak the word of God
Even out in the World
When God presents the opportunity
Say grace before meals
even in restaurants

Reflect Him in how we live our lives
That may be the most powerful means we have to spread the
Gospel

Be the example of Christian life
to all who know,
see
or hear us.

Ephphatha . . . Be Opened

