

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad.”

The famous quote by Lord Acton resonates for a reason, “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority; still more when you superadd the tendency of the certainty of corruption by authority.” Man likes to have power. He likes to think he has authority to do things in and of himself and he likes to think he can speak authoritatively from his own thoughts, opinions, and musings. This is a spiritual blindness that looks inward and really a muteness that does not speak the truth. There is one whose power is absolute in and of himself and this is for your salvation.

Today, you heard the account of Jesus healing a man. He exercises his power as God in the flesh and acts with the authority that has been given to him. Jesus worked a miracle as only he could do. Jesus exercises his power to heal and to save. There is no corruption, deceit, or selfishness in what does. Jesus acts out of grace and mercy. He restores what has been broken and tainted by sin. He sets free those who were in bondage to sin and its consequences. He preaches the truth which sets you free for he himself is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He works miracles. “Then [Jesus] returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 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. And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, ‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’ And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.

Extending this out now, St. Paul in the Epistle reading points the Corinthians and you to see even where his work and office come from on the one hand and what this all means that he speaks as a minister of the new covenant on the other. He wrote, “Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” Paul was not sufficient in himself and did not speak by his own authority. Likewise, this word he preached and taught was none other than God’s word which kills and makes alive. The Lord acted and intervened in the lives of the Corinthians, and he acts and intervenes this very instant as you have those same Scriptures, those same words which kill and make alive.

Something happens when Jesus intervenes, and Jesus does intervene for you. He knows your state. He knows what is rightly due this fallen world. He knows the assaults of the devil. He knows what sin has brought about and what it means to live in this world. Outside of Christ there are only, sin, darkness, and death. Jesus though, is the Righteous one. He is the Word made flesh. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning, and the end. Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it

wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

The things of God, the things of life are only heard and understood in faith. They don't come by your own power or your own reason or strength. A new life in Christ which turns from sin and desires all that is righteous, good, true, and beautiful only comes and flows from Jesus who alone is the righteousness of God. As Christians, you have been called by the Gospel. Your ears have been opened to hear the words of Jesus and know that these words are for you, and they are the words of eternal life. Don't take that for granted in your life. Always remember who you are as one who has been given ears to hear and a tongue that has been released. Jesus has worked this miracle of faith in your life and your life lives this faith out every day in what you say and do.

When you hear Jesus, you then can begin to speak correctly for you have God's word, the Holy Scriptures. The word used here for “plainly” is the word “orthos” where the words “orthodoxy” right teaching or literally right praise comes from along with “orthodontics” which is right or straight teeth. The man is healed by Jesus and speaks rightly as a Christian does whose ears have been opened to hear God's word and that same word placed on his lips as Psalm 51 says, “O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise.” Jesus intervenes, God speaks. God creates faith for “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” as the Romans 10 teaches.

Here's the thing, though, as well in all of this, God, in his great mercy also gives you the very words by which you speak of Christ and his church. This is called confession. It says back what God has said to you through his word and you speak what he speaks to you. It's the voice of a loosened tongue set free to speak the words of Christ. It says back what God has said to you. You confess Christ. You, in faith, confess the Christian faith which has been handed down through the ages, this “orthodox” faith. This is the same understanding and premise which guides the church's public confession in the Book of Concord, the Lutheran Confessions.

Speaking rightly or clearly is important, then, because your Lord doesn't lie, and his truth has been revealed to you. One trick of the devil is when he tries to tempt the church to think speaking rightly isn't important. The devil, along with the world and your fallen flesh, want you to be one who doesn't speak at all or one who does speak what your ears have heard through God's word but rather what you have heard from the world, the devil, and your fallen flesh whatever those words and confession may say. But remember, though, where faith comes from and how you have it? It comes from hearing and hearing the word of Christ. You must be a listener of the word of God to know Jesus and know him rightly.

Likewise, one who doesn't hear the word of God cannot claim to believe in Jesus or know him. Sure, he may know of a “Jesus”, but this Jesus can easily become a false god in the minds and imaginations of men. The people who fashioned the golden calf and wanted to throw a feast in honor YHWH. God cannot be mocked, however, he intervenes, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.” God instead desires for you to listen to him and speak what he says. He intervenes forgiving your sins and creating in you a clean heart and renews in you a right spirit.

With all of this in mind, what's the purpose in all of this? In Romans 15 it says, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." When you see the Lord work miracles like he does in this Gospel reading today be encouraged, Jesus intervenes, and it gives you hope. How? Your Lord is still at work, still working through his means of grace, and gives you a glimpse of what your future is when he returns and raises you up on the Last Day.

See Jesus work this miracle for this man and know this is also for you. Jesus does give you hope because he preaches to you, you hear Jesus clearly, and you confess this Lord who worked this miracle is the same one who has redeemed you, is with you now, and will raise you up on the Last Day. You know who Jesus is, he is your Lord, who has redeemed you a lost and condemned person, purchased and won you from all sin, death, and the power of the devil not with gold or silver but with his holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death that you may be his own. That's Jesus who does all things well. He's more than just some miracle worker, he's God in the flesh. He's the one who has intervened to save you and he has. He's the one promised of old by the prophets and in whom all the fullness of God dwells. You are his and he is yours. That's who he is rightly revealed to be and who you are in all of this as you hear his word and listen with the ears of faith.

In this, then, there is hope. Be of good cheer dear Christians. Your Lord does indeed do all things well. He worked a miracle for this man. He took your sin upon himself so that you have peace with God through his blood shed for you. Jesus is crucified for you, and he is risen from the dead and you will rise from your grave as well. He still intervenes in your life. You are baptized into Christ, you have the Holy Scriptures, you have been gathered into the Holy Christian Church, he feeds you with his own body and blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Don't ever doubt for one instant that Jesus isn't working in your life right now.

Jesus is with you always as you have these things and you are not left as orphans as the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is your advocate. Rejoice in the miracle Jesus performed intervening in this man's life// You have hope as you know this is but a glimpse of what you will see when the Lord raises you up from grave and there is no more sin, no more suffering, and no more death. Jesus has redeemed your soul and body and the day is coming when he will intervene as he returns in Triumph on the clouds with the voice of an archangel and the sound of the trumpet. On that glorious and miraculous day you will be with him and all of God's saints in a glory beyond compare. That day will be the eternal day where your eyes see fully and rightly what your faith has been confessing. Your tongue will be loosed to fully proclaim the excellencies of him who bought you and join in singing the praises to the Lamb and feasting at his banquet forever.

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