

The title of today's message is; **Jesus still performs opened today**

Mark said; *He meaning Jesus, looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, Ephphatha (eff-a-tha) that is, Be opened!*

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

You know, when someone gives you an A grade on anything you do, whether its on a test or for an assignment.

It's an immediate confirmation that your hard work paid off, that the time you spent hitting the books or working hard, wasn't wasted after all.

But there's something even greater than receiving an "A" for your work and that is the words "Good Job".

It's an affirmation if you will, that goes way beyond any letter grade. In fact in most cases, It says your work was exceptional.

Its a grade above the rest. A grade that speaks loudly today and counts as nothing less today.

Now, Mark tells us that Jesus had just come from the borders of Tyre and Sidon passing by the Sea of Galilee.

And then arriving in the midst of ten coastal cities of Decapolis. And just as in other places, Jesus' reputation preceded Him, once again drawing a large crowd of people.

The people were hoping to catch a glimpse, perhaps even a demonstration of Jesus' power, or maybe to be healed themselves.

And it just so happened that on this occasion, a man that was deaf and dumb was quickly brought before Jesus for healing.

Mark tells us that Jesus then takes this man, away from the crowd where ***Jesus put His fingers into the man's ears. Then He spit and touched the man's tongue. Jesus then looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him: Ephphatha,***

Immediately, according to Mark: ***the man's ears were opened, and his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.***

Just like that, the man was healed, and when the crowd saw what Jesus had done with the man, they were overwhelmed with amazement.

Now, I think it's safe to say, that Jesus' intention here was to open more than just this man's ears and tongue.

As always Jesus used His divine powers to open the eyes, and hearts of all those in the crowd.

That's why He looks up to heaven with a deep sigh. He wanted to open their eyes to see, and understand that the healing came from heaven.

That its divine, and almighty, far different from anything human. He wanted to open their tongues to proclaim that He is indeed God's chosen Savior.

The one whom the prophet Isaiah said: would unstop the ears of the deaf and bring the mute tongue to shout for joy.

He wanted to open their hearts to the service of others and the sharing of His good news.

Service not out of a sense of obligation either, but out of joy for the new life that has been given to them.

Spiritually Jesus open the ears, tongues, eyes and hearts of all who were gathered there that day, and for those of us here today.

So, the people were right, Jesus does do all things well, a “Good Job”. Yet for many there that day it wasn’t such a “good job”.

For many failed to follow the command of Jesus, He wanted the people there to keep what they saw to themselves. Many did not.

It’s a curious thing isn’t it, that is, Jesus’ request for the people to not tell anyone what they saw.

But Jesus had His reasons. Chief among them was the fact that a vast majority of the people, had their ears plugged.

Their ears were plugged by various misconceptions about whom and what Jesus was. You see, for many, Jesus was a spectacle to behold.

Yet for some, they saw Jesus as the promised Messiah; however, they didn’t understand what kind of Messiah He would be.

Look, there were all kinds of reasons the people came to see Jesus that day. Much like people today.

Some are like spectators, they come only when something unique, something special, is about to happen that they don’t want to miss.

Some approach our Lord as if, He were a lifeguard at the beach, largely unnoticed and not wanted, unless they begin to drown in life's troubles.

The trouble comes when Jesus doesn't live up to what they've made Him out to be.

That's when they reject Him. Many did in His days, and many still do. As we've read in the Gospels many times.

Large portions of the crowds that followed Jesus, deserted Him when it became clear that He wasn't going to meet their expectations of Him.

The same problem stands today, unless Jesus and His church find ways to entertain the wishes and desires of the people, their out of here.

And if the Word of God gets a bit too close to home, such as pointing out the immorality of something we really like to do.

Or if its calling for a greater commitment than what were willing to give, we flee. We run from God as if He is our enemy.

Another words, if Jesus doesn't deliver in the way we expect or want, we simply conclude that He doesn't care. So why should we.

When He pushes us to gather together for more instruction in His Word, at Bible Study's and family devotional times, we pushed back.

When we ask for healing of ourselves or our loved ones and He's said, "No, we doubt Him rather than trust Him.

But we must remember. This is Jesus who does all things well. This is Jesus who has nothing but man's physical and spiritual health in mind.

This is Jesus who doesn't wish to drive us away, nor lead us astray; but desires nothing less than to open our ears to the truth of His Word.

He opens our eyes to who He truly is, our hearts to receive Him by faith and for greater service, and our mouths to sing His praises before others.

As Jesus said in chapter 12: ***"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."***

Jesus not only took this man aside to set his attention on Him. He's taken the eyes of us all today, and fixed them upon Him on the cross.

In His suffering and death and in His being forsaken of God, we see the seriousness of our sin.

We see just how far we have drifted from the will, and ways of our God. Yet we see even more.

In His silence, and complete willingness to go to the cross without a fight, we see the merciful intention of God to save us from our sins.

And in His Words He would have us know, that we have a God who does forgive us of our greatest offenses.

There's no doubt that our well-being is very important to Him, but our salvation is essential to Him, the fact is, it's His top priority.

That's one thing we certainly should not forget, especially when things just don't go our way.

In His wisdom He doesn't always give us exactly what we ask for, or want, and it's not because He doesn't care about us.

Its because He has something better in store for us, always with our eternal life in mind, and that of others.

We see that loving care in His blood, sweat and tears, in the giving of His all, so as to open for us the way to eternal life.

And with His arms opened wide, He tells us that He intends to give these things, and even more, to all who believe, yes to you and to me.

No one is excluded, no one is kept away. Look its Jesus' desire that all people be saved, after all Jesus did pay the price for everyone's salvation

Even as He said "eff-a-tha" over the deaf-mutes head, so also He speaks the same word over our heads has in the water and Word of Holy Baptism.

There in those Holy waters, He gave you and me the eyes to see His great love and mercy.

He gave us the heart to receive Him in faith; and all that He has done in His life, His death, and His resurrection.

He has opened our hands to joyful service, and He continues to say "effatha" over us today as He brings us His Word.

This is the good news for us today. While we have at times tended to close the door on Him, He hasn't closed the door on us.

My friends, it's Jesus' intention right now, that your eyes be open to see Him as one who has always been open to you and your needs.

It's His desire that your hearts cling to Him in faith, that they be open to the fire of His Spirit, and to a new life.

It's His design to open wide your hands in service to others, as He has opened His hands to you.

Were to hear and speak, so that others may know this good news as well. And He has promised that He would never give up on us.

Instead, He says "be opened" every time He brings us His Word of Life, and every time we gather here in His house.

And every time we gather around the altar and receive the Lord's supper, He says "be opened."

As Jesus said in chapter 4: ***For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.***

Amen!

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.