

Pentecost 15 (Proper 18)  
September 8, 2012  
Text: Mark 7:31-37  
Theme: "Getting Down and Dirty with Jesus"

**If you remember the Gospel from two weeks ago, Jesus was among the Jews, and he and his disciples were being condemned for not following their customs of washing their hands before they ate. Well, today he has taken his dirty hands with him and gone to the land of the Gentiles to heal people who know they are dirty and need cleansing. They are not so worried about the sanitation of Jesus' hands and are more concerned with what he does with those dirty hands. Now just take a moment to think about the Gospel account we have before us today. Jesus took his dirty hands and stuck them in the deaf man's ears. Then he spit, presumably on his fingers, and stuck his dirty, spitty fingers inside the dirty mouth of that deaf man, touched his tongue and healed him. Is that gross enough for you? How would you react if the doctor came into the room for your physical and the first thing he did was spit on his hands?**

**What does it take to open the ears of the deaf and loose the tongue of the mute? Apparently it is not sissy work. It is roll up your sleeves and get down and dirty work. Sticking fingers in ears and touching tongues is not pleasant work. And it certainly is not pleasant to have the practitioner spit on his hands before working. So it shouldn't surprise us that many people reject doing this kind of**

**work. People like to think of following Jesus as all sweetness and light instead of dirt and spit.**

**And what was the point of the spit and the touching? Physical means. Jesus often attaches his work to something physical, touchable, visible, visceral. He comes to us through Baptismal water, wine and bread and words. We have an easier time believing the miracle when his power flows through something. In addition to that, to spit on something was the height of insult. Jesus spit on disease and illness. He made it clear that he was the Lord of life and no disease, infirmity, illness or disability could stand in his way.**

**Jesus calls us to do the same work as he did. He calls us to make disciples of all nations, to go to the spiritually deaf and blind and to open their ears and eyes to him. But many ignore that commission. Christians think of it more as the Fabulous Option instead of the Great Commission. So when our kids want to go on a sleep over and skip church, what can we do? We don't want to be that nerdy Christian parent who expects our kids to be in church every Sunday and invite their friends to come with them! When our neighbor laughs at religion and says that he never much understood all that church stuff, what do we say? We don't want to be that Holy Roller on the block that thinks God and religion are the big deal in life! When our political leaders lead in a way that conflicts with God,**

**what can we do? I mean as long as the stock market is going up and I don't have to pay more in taxes, what does it matter right?**

**It would be nice if Christianity was all nice and clean and sterile but it is not. It is down and dirty. It conflicts with the world in every way, day in and day out. This is a battle we are waging not a picnic in the park, and the enemy is quite willing to go to every length to press his agenda and to win. How far will you go? How uncomfortable are you willing to be or how uncomfortable are you willing to make other people? Our calling is to proclaim Christ. Jesus walked up to that deaf man and did what was necessary to heal him. Are you willing to do the same for people you know who are either already spiritually deaf and blind or quickly becoming that way – even if it takes a little spit and dirt? Or are you willing to let that person go to Hell so that you will not be embarrassed and look like one who is not of this world?**

**We are all evangelists and I know that evangelism is a dirty word because nincompoops have ruined it by making it sissy and frilly. Trinity is not fluffy congregation and fluffy ideas tend to make us ill. But there is nothing fluffy about evangelism. Evangelism means that you believe that Jesus Christ is your savior and as one who has been saved from eternal death and pulled into the lifeboat, maybe you would like to do the same for others. And you start with**

**your own family. I know that if I'm in a lifeboat, the first people who are going to get pulled in are Dänya, Noah, Neal and Sara. Until they're in the boat, everyone else can drown. Don't be shocked. Saving people from death is usually dirty work. From my immediate family, I'll start pulling in other people I know and once everyone I know is in the boat I'll start looking for random strangers. That's evangelism. It's not arguing theology or judging sinners. It's pulling drowning people into the lifeboat. It's hard work. Sometimes it's dirty and smelly work...like on youth retreats or on sick calls or volunteering at the homeless shelter. It starts at home and broadens from there. And it is our calling as people who have been rescued from hell by the death and damnation of Jesus Christ.**

**So, we are all evangelists. We were made evangelists when we were saved by the Baptismal waters poured over our heads and given faith in Christ. It is now our commission to make disciples of those around us who are dead or dying. Will you accept that commission? Even if the work is dirty and difficult? Or will you reject that commission and let people die so that you won't be uncomfortable and inconvenienced?**