

Almighty God, our Father, Your blessed Son has called us to follow Him through the ministration of the Holy Spirit, we give You thanks that the healing medicine of the Gospel in Word and the Sacraments has put to flight the disease of our souls that we may rightly use our ears and tongues in hearing Your Word diligently and devoutly, praising Your grace even proclaiming it to others, and thereby further the spreading of Your Gospel among all nations through Jesus Christ, our Great Physician. Amen.

[Jesus said:] "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

In Christ Jesus, the Good Tree of Life, which bears good fruit, that is, us who believe in Him as Savior, dear fellow redeemed:

You have probably heard the expression: "*Garbage in, garbage out!*" It appears to be an expression, which arose from the computer science world, although it applies in other disciplines based on logic, like mathematics. It is an expression, which means if you input the wrong data the results will also be wrong. It also applies in many areas of life, especially in regard to spiritual matters.

It could summarize what Jesus says in our text: "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil." But this is not to suggest that we are empty vessels waiting for our decision to fill ourselves up with good or evil. The treasures of our hearts from our conceptions and births were nothing but evil, inherited from our parents. So the good input must be given to us by the gracious will and action of God alone. We like the man in our Gospel who was physically deaf and mute have been healed spiritually, so that **Our Sin-Sick Hearts Are Healed and We Speak the Truth.**

I

Due to our sinful conception and birth, we were deaf to the truth of God's revelation of Himself as found in the holy Scriptures. We can admit this now since we have been healed. But most who have not had their natural sin-sick hearts healed would normally object and insist they know God and have sufficient knowledge to

earn their own way into heaven – *“thank you very much!”*. By this error that sinners could earn their own way into heaven reveals their hearts are still sin-sick, delusional with pride and arrogance.

Most of us do not remember being healed, since it took place in in our infancy through holy baptism. But those of you who do remember that blessed transition from going from being spiritually deaf and mute to hearing and confessing the Truth of God’s revelation of Himself and His relationship with us, may speak of it with the same astonishment as the crowd in the Gospel lesson: “(Jesus) has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”!

Again for most of us, we have to take the word of our Lord that this is the way it used to be for us and what we now experience is truly a miracle. If you need confirmation of what God tells you about your natural condition, consider the inability of your unbelieving relatives and acquaintances to hear the Gospel with joy and speak of it with the conviction of a believing heart. You may have spoken the truth of God’s love for all people, which includes them and that in His Son He saved them from sin, death and hell, but they continue to reject it. They may call it all foolishness or too good to be true that salvation is given to sinners absolutely free. Or they may insist that God has to accept them for who they are and declare that they are not too bad, so that their level of unrighteousness should be sufficient for God to permit them to enter His heaven.

Typically as sinners, we think about our sin as only being skin deep, in other words, that what we commit on the outside by actions or words is what condemns us. But our sin is rooted deeply within us, often hidden from our neighbors manifesting itself occasionally in words and deeds. The Pharisees, to whom Jesus especially was speaking the words of our text, were known for such shallow understanding of the problem of sin. They admitted to being sinners, but they were not seeking a Savior, only a coach who would speak words of encouragement in their quest to achieve sufficient self-righteousness.

Think how words reveal a heart to be filled with bitterness, or oppressive grief, or jealousy, or pride, or greed, or lust, or covetousness, or hatred. We draw conclusions about another person based on their conversations. If we are an employer we will decide on hiring based on what we hear. If we are looking for a spouse we will listen carefully, hopefully, to the way in which the potential spouse not only speaks to him or her, but to others – family members, strangers, superiors, subordinates. Words tell us much and of course

actions do as well. They indicate what is going on inside hidden for the most part.

II

Have you spoken carelessly? Have your words offended others? You would be a fool to imagine your words have always been pure and inoffensive. It is sobering to hear Jesus say: “on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” So naturally each one of us asks ourselves, have we spoken words, which condemn us? Again, we all have, to be sure. But on account of our healing within, which has happened through the miraculous working of the Spirit upon our hearts, we are cleansed and we speak words that now justify.

You see, the Spirit has given you faith in Jesus as Savior. What does this mean for you? Jesus bore the punishment for all your careless and hurtful words. He was condemned for them all. Those words came from your wicked heart and again He was punished for that condition as well. He is your holy Substitute who was named the sinner for you. Your evil heart was crucified with Him. But what is more He took a holy life to that cross, a life where all His words were spoken in true love. Never did Jesus speak a careless word, which condemned Him. So now through faith in Him, you have that perfect record of speaking only good words attributed to you.

So your heart has been healed by the precious blood of the Son of God and in faith you now speak the truth of what God has done for you and all people. Every time you hear the absolution of all your sins for Jesus' sake, you break out in song giving glory to God who has won this forgiveness for you. These are justifying words! Every time the pastor says: *“The Lord be with you.”* You respond by saying *“And with your spirit.”* These are justifying words! Every time you recite the creed, you conclude by either singing or speaking: *“Amen”*. These are justifying words!

It goes beyond corporate worship as you join your voices with your brothers and sisters in Christ speaking the words that justify sinners. You speak individually in your every day interactions with your neighbors these same rehearsed expressions of God's gracious justification in His Son, but spoken spontaneously in your own words. You do it in your conversations at home, in school, in the work place. God's love for you in His Son is always on the tip of your tongue, whether you are aware of it or not.

(We get to install another “miracle worker” as a teacher in our school today. Mrs. Ring will have this privilege of speaking the justifying words to

the students under her charge everyday. Yes, she will have to mete out consequences for ill behavior, but she will get to send all her students home every afternoon with the message that in Christ they are forgiven of all their sins.)

God has made you a good tree in His grove and you produce good fruit, which gives Him glory. The treasure of your heart is the good news of salvation in Christ. This colors your speech in every way. Your neighbors will recognize that your speech is generally free from bitterness, or oppressive grief, or jealousy, or pride, or greed, or lust, or covetousness, or hatred. Yes, we still sin and these things will also be expressed in our everyday weakness, but by God's grace, through repentance and faith we seek to drown such condemning expressions in the waters of our cleansing baptisms.

Truly our Lord has done all things well for you, your sin-sick heart has been healed. Your ears have been opened to hear and trust God's truth. Your tongue has been loosed so that you now naturally get to speak the truth of God's great love for all. Continue by God's grace to listen and speak with all joy in Christ, your Savior. Amen.