



Healing the Deaf and Mute Man

Mark 7:32-37

Pepper the Pelican, his wings outstretched in full flight, skimmed across the blue sparkling waves. Salty spray filled the air and coated his feathers. Scanning each rolling wave, he searched for the shadow of his next catch, a big and tasty fish. As soon as he saw the glimmer of a fish's scales just beneath the water's surface, he dove and caught his breakfast in his beak.

Moments later, he landed on the white sand to enjoy his catch. Somewhere behind him, he heard someone calling his name.

"Pepper, Pepper!" He turned around and saw Mumsy coming towards him, enjoying a morning walk on the beach.

"Good morning, Mumsy! You are looking well!" Pepper greeted Mumsy.

"Ta-da! I'm healed! It was the most amazing thing. I was feeling awful and then you and 800 Pound Gorilla and my own little Monkey Toes and Boo Boo Kitty began to pray for me and God gave me a 'right away' healing!"

Pepper gulped his last bite of fish and smiled, "I know! We were so happy! It was a miracle! Isn't it great when we get to see a surprise healing from God? And speaking of surprises, we've got a great, big surprise for you, Mumsy."

Mumsy danced with excitement. "A surprise?! I love surprises! What is it? What is it?"

"Algie and Chauncey taught 800 Pound Gorilla how to fly!" Pepper replied.

"How wonderful!" Mumsy said.

"And 800 Pound Gorilla and me have planned a special flight demonstration in your honor!"

"Oh, I bet it's a flyover! Oh, I do love flyovers," Mumsy cheered. "When do you start?"

"Just as soon as we can get to the hangar and airstrip. 800 Pound Gorilla has been readying the planes for takeoff and is waiting for our arrival."

"Oh, this is so exciting!" Mumsy grinned and turned to follow Pepper as he walked down the path through the rainforest to the airstrip in the middle of the island.

After arriving, Pepper flew over to the two planes. Algernon and Chauncey were going over the flight checklist with 800 Pound Gorilla.

"Are you ready, 800 Pound Gorilla?" Pepper asked.

The gorilla responded with both thumbs up. Pepper landed in the seat of Chauncey's plane while Gorilla pulled his big body up into Algernon's plane. The Bonzai brothers jogged over to the side of the field to watch the flyover with their mother.

"Roger Wilco! Let's start our engines!" Pepper yelled as 800 Pound Gorilla taxied his plane down the runway behind him. Soon they were soaring over the trees towards the ocean. A few minutes later, they both flew back into view, coming from opposite sides of the airfield.

"Oh, this is going to be just lovely! Look at them go! 800 Pound Gorilla is flying so high and so straight," Mumsy cheered. Suddenly she gasped and shouted, "Oh no! He is flying straight for Pepper's plane! Look out, Pepper, you're going to crash! Duck and cover!"

Mumsy and the Bonzai Brothers ran to hide behind a tree as 800 Pound Gorilla's plane collided into Pepper's plane with a loud bang. After all of the crashing noises were over, the Bonzais ran out to see what had happened.

"Pepper! Oh, my! Dear sweet, Pepper!" cried Mumsy. "What has become of you? Oh, say it isn't so! My fine feathered friend, I've lost you! Oh, I'll miss you so. If only I could hear your sweet, squawky voice once more." She sat down hard on the ground and cried big tears. Algernon gave her a handkerchief and she blew her nose with a loud "honk."

Over by the wrecked planes, Pepper and Gorilla popped their heads out from the twisted pile of metal. "Oh, man! That was not fun!" Pepper groaned as he pulled himself out of what was left of his seat.

Mumsy continued to cry. "I can hear him. It's almost as though he was still with us."

Pepper stumbled over to where Mumsy was sitting. "Did anyone get the number of that bus that hit me?!"

"Pepper! It's you!" She yelled as she threw her arms around him and gave him a hug.

The pelican coughed and tried to look around past Mumsy's tight embrace. "Where am I?"

Mumsy squeezed him tighter. "You're safe in Mumsy's arms! Are you ok?"

"Wh-wh-wh-what?!" Pepper sputtered.

"I said, are you okay?!" Mumsy yelled.

"WHAT!! Speak up? Why are you whispering?" Pepper wondered.

"I'm not whispering, I'm shouting!" Mumsy paused, "Oh dear, Pepper, you've lost your hearing.

"What?" Pepper squawked.

"I say, I say, you've lost your hearing!!" Mumsy shouted as she let go of him.

Pepper flapped his wings and fell backwards to the ground. "I've tossed my key ring!"

Mumsy laughed. "Not your key ring, your hearing!"

He put his wing up to his ear. "What? I can't hear you," he yelled. "I think I've lost my hearing!"

"You have, Pepper! And this reminds me of a story. "

"Who's Laurie?" Pepper yelled again, really confused at this point.

"I said story! Story!" Mumsy yelled back. "Oh never mind. Let me just get the Bible." Mumsy waited as Algie ran to retrieve the Bible from the Cargo Crate and bring it to her. "This story is in the book of Mark."

Pepper looked around. "Yeah, it is gettin' a little dark."

"Mark! Mark!" Mumsy yelled. "Aghh! It's Mark 7:32-37. Now, in this story there is a man who cannot hear or speak! Sound familiar?" Pepper nodded, trying hard to understand what Mumsy was saying. "Mm-hmm," he said.

She continued in a loud voice. "The crowd begged Jesus to touch him and heal him. So he took the man aside and put His fingers in the man's ears. Then He spit and touched the man's tongue."

"Eww! Yuck!" Pepper made a face and stuck out his tongue.

"It *was* kind of an unusual thing to do. But then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, '*Ephphatha!*' That word means to be opened." Mumsy continued reading, "*At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly!*"

Pepper shook his head in a confused way and asked Mumsy, "Hey, what did you just say?"

"You mean Ephphatha?" Mumsy asked.

Pepper nodded. "In English, please?"

Mumsy lifted her hands over her head towards the sky and cried in a loud voice, "Be opened!"

Pepper flew into the air and did a summersault. "It worked! I can hear perfectly! I'm healed!"

"Oh, hoorah!" Mumsy cheered. "It's a miracle – a miracle that can lead to many more miracles!"

Pepper was confused. He asked, "It does?"

"Of course," Mumsy nodded. "When our ears are open to the things of God, we can hear that Jesus loves us. With our mouths, we tell Him we want to belong to Him. And that's when He heals our hearts.

Pepper was even more confused. "I thought it was so that we could talk with each other."

"Well, both really," Mumsy smiled. "God wants us to have friendships with Him and with His whole, great, big family!"

"So I can use my healed ears to hear truths from God and my mouth to praise Jesus! I can't wait to tell Monkey Toes and Boo-Boo Kitty!" Pepper flew off to tell the entire story Algernon and Chauncey, who were now working hard to put their plane back together.

Mumsy laughed as she watched Pepper go. "It's just like my boys say, 'It's incredible but true, what the God of Wonders can do!' I think I will go help my boys repair their planes. I'm sure they need someone to tell them exactly what to do! Afterwards, perhaps I will even give 800 Pound Gorilla a flying lesson. He certainly could use a bit more practice!"