

16th March 2021

Mute

“Mute and magnificent, without a tear.”

John Dryden, Threnodia Augustalis (1685)

Among the many words and phrases which will stick in our memories when this pandemic is behind us – such as epidemiologist, covid-secure, spike-protein and Pfizer/BioNTech – perhaps the most common is

“You’re on mute!”

Courtesy of ubiquitous Zoom events – from worship to family quizzes, business meetings to BBC interviews – we’ve all heard it and used it. Someone is speaking, but nothing is being heard. The “speaking” icon under their image has a red line through it – until they are bombarded with a chorus of advice/complaints/criticisms, often loudly, and certainly forcibly, *“You’re on mute!”* And like you, I’m sure, I’ve been both the recipient and the communicator of this well-rehearsed observation.

In Mark’s Gospel there’s a story of Jesus healing a man who was deaf and had “an impediment of speech”, some translations describing the man as being a “deaf-mute”. Jesus was passing through “the territory of the ten towns”, or *Decapolis* as the Greeks called it. And when the deaf-mute man was brought to him, Jesus took him aside, touched him and said, *Ephphatha*, “Be opened”. And at once the speech impediment had gone and the man was “able to speak plainly”.

Ephphatha is an Aramaic word. So it’s clear that Jesus used the language of the common people. He spoke plainly, and a distressed deaf-mute man was able to speak plainly in return. Where once he had no words, he now had a new beginning. Where once he had no language, he now had available to him a new way of communicating. Where once he was mute, in speech and perhaps in faith, he had now met with his Lord.

Don’t let “You’re on mute” be a barrier between us and the nature of God. Whether there are words or no words, common or refined, from this language or that, verbalised or “on mute”, the offer of meaningful and healing interaction with our Lord *is* available to us, as long as we remove the red line through our icon to make our communication possible again.

A prayer for today

*Listening God, if I unmute myself with you,
will I be ready when you unmute yourself for me? Amen*

An original reflection by @ Tom Gordon Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>