

SHUT MY MOUTH

(Romans 3: 19-28)

Intro: His name is John Francis.
-I read about him in my college alumni magazine.
#On Wisconsin.

In 1971.

- Francis witnessed the collision of two oil tankers.
 - #Underneath the Golden Gate Bridge.
 - #Spilling 840,000 gallons of crude oil.
 - *Into San Francisco Bay.
- Francis decided he would no longer participate in the "oil economy."
 - #He gave up:
 - *Driving.
 - *Riding.
 - +In motorized vehicles.
 - #He walked everywhere.
 - *I guess he didn't have a bicycle.
 - *He walked.
 - +Across the United States.
 - =To call attention to environmental issues.
 - =Earning three college degrees in the process.
 - His Bachelor's Degree.
 - #In Oregon.
 - His Master's Degree.
 - #In Montana.
 - His Ph.D.
 - #In Wisconsin.
 - +When the U.S. Coast Guard called.
 - =Asking for his help in developing regulations.
 - To implement the 1990 Oil Pollution Act.
 - #After the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska.
 - =He walked.
 - From New York.
 - To Washington, D.C.
 - #Taking two months to get there.
 - +When he was hit by a car.
 - =Badly injuring his shoulder.
 - =He refused to ride in the ambulance.
 - =He walked 15 blocks to the hospital.
 - +He walked everywhere.

#He didn't talk.

*When people learned that Francis didn't drive.

+They got into arguments with him.

=Perhaps feeling judged.

-Because of their own dependence on the automobile.

=Perhaps feeling the futility of his decision.

-What difference can one person make?

#By choosing not to use gasoline-dependent.

*Modes of transportation.

+Francis got tired of arguing.

*One year on his birthday.

+He decided not to talk for the whole day.

+Then he decided to keep silence.

=For a second day.

=For a third day.

=Finally for a full year.

*Each year on his birthday.

+He would re-evaluate his decision to keep silence.

*He earned three college degrees.

+Without saying a word.

*He even taught college classes.

+As a teaching assistant.

+Without saying a word.

*For 17 years he didn't speak a word.

I. What Would It Be Like If Every Voice Were Silenced?

A. Maybe We Would Welcome It.

1. At least for the next nine days.
2. Wouldn't that be a blessing!
 - a. No more campaign ads.
 - To listen to.
 - b. No more mud slinging.
 - To pollute the airwaves.

B. St. Paul Describes Such A Situation.

1. In our reading from Romans.
 - a. "Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world held accountable to God. For 'no human being will be justified in his sight' by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin."
 - b. Romans 3:19-28.

2. What is Paul talking about?
 - a. "So that every voice may be silenced."
 - b. Picture a courtroom.
 - You are the accused.
 - #Accused not by some human prosecutor.
 - *Of violating some human law.
 - #Accused by God.
 - *Of violating God's law.
 - *Of being a sinner.
 - +Serious charge.
 - +Capital offense.
 - +Penalty is death.
 - #You know you are guilty.
 - What are you going to say?
 - What can you say?
 - #"I didn't mean it."
 - #"Mine isn't as bad as some other folk's."
 - #"Everybody's doing it."
 - #"I'm only human."
 - #"Nobody's perfect."
 - c. Every voice will be silenced.
 - No alibis.
 - No excuses.
 - d. That's what God's law does.
 - It accuses us.
 - It convicts us.
 - It silences us.
 - It shuts our mouths.
3. When our mouths are shut.
 - a. We can listen.
 - b. We can listen.
 - For the verdict.
 - From the divine judge.
 - #"You are guilty, as charged."
 - *"You deserve to die."
 - #"But you're free to go."
 - *"Your sentence has already been served."
 - *"Jesus has died in your place."
4. Can you believe this?
 - a. It is faith that saves us.
 - b. It is faith that sets us free.
 - Not free to do as we please.
 - But free to do what is pleasing to God.

II. His Name Was Martin Luther.

A. His Mouth Was Not Shut.

1. As a young monk.
 - a. He struggled:
 - To live a holy life.
 - To do the will of God.
 - b. When he failed.
 - Which was often.
 - He ran to his confessor.
 - #Dr. John Staupitz.
 - To confess his sin.
 - #If he passed gas.
 - *Luther ran to confess.
 - #If he remembered that he had forgotten to confess something.
 - *Luther ran to confess that he forgot.
2. Luther was a tormented soul.
 - a. Convinced that God was angry with him.
 - Needed to be appeased.
 - #If only Luther would perhaps try harder to live a holy life.
 - b. Dr. Staupitz tried to suggest.
 - God was not angry with Luther.
 - Maybe it was Luther who was angry with God.

B. God Had To Shut Luther's Mouth.

1. After Luther was ordained.
 - a. He moved to Wittenberg, Germany.
 - Parish priest.
 - #At St. Mary's Church.
 - Professor of theology.
 - #At the University of Wittenberg.
 - b. He began to lecture.
 - First on the Psalms.
 - Then on Romans.
2. Somewhere along the line.
 - a. God shut Luther's mouth.
 - b. So that Luther could listen to God.
 - "Martin, it's not about you."
 - "It's not about how holy you are."
 - "It's not about how often or how well you confess your sins."
 - "It's about what I have done for you in Jesus."
 - "It's about love."
 - "It's about forgiveness."
 - "It's about faith."

- C. Then Luther's Mouth Was Opened Again.
1. To proclaim.
 - a. The grace of God in Jesus, the Christ.
 - b. We are saved by God's grace.
 - Through faith.
 - Not through works of the law.
 2. To write.
 - a. Translating the Scriptures into German.
 - So that any literate person could read.
 - #Word of God.
 - #For themselves.
 - b. Enough:
 - Sermons.
 - Lectures.
 - Letters.
 - #To fill 54 volumes on my library shelves.
 - #Think of what Luther might have produced!
 - *If he had had:
 - +Computer.
 - +Word processing.
 - +Email.
 3. To challenge.
 - a. Selling of indulgences.
 - Pieces of paper.
 - Certificates.
 - #That offered forgiveness of sins.
 - *For a price.
 - b. One of the main points.
 - Of Luther's 95 Theses.
 - #Debating points.
 - Nailed to the Castle Church door.
 - #On All Hallowed's Eve.
 - *Eve of All Saints' Day.
 - #October 31, 1517.

Concl: On this Reformation Day.
-At least for a moment.
#God shuts our mouths.
#God silences our tongues.
*So that we can hear his verdict of us.
+"Yes, you are guilty."
-Guilty as sin.
-Guilty of sin.
+"But in Jesus Christ you are free."
=Go.
=Love.
=Forgive.
=Believe.
=Die to sin.
+"You are free."
=Walk the walk.
=Talk the talk.

John Francis.

-Not only walked across the United States.
-He also walked across South America.
#Long way.
*North to south.
#One day as he was walking through Venezuela.
*He walked past a prison.
*As he walked.
+He thought of how he had become a prisoner.
=To his own rules.
-Not using motorized transportation.
-Not talking.
#Even to promote his environmental concerns.
-On his 44th birthday.
#He began to speak again.
-Now he even drives a car.
#Hybrid.
*Traveling the country.
*Traveling the world.
=Speaking.
=Caring.
-For God's creation.

God shuts our mouths.

-So that we can listen.

Then God opens:

- Our mouths.
- Our hearts.
- Our hands.
- Our pocket books.

#Why?

*We say it in our Mission Statement.

+Responding to God's love,

+We faithfully
=Welcome.

=Worship.

=Grow.

=Witness.

=Serve.

