

Mark 7: 31-37

**Then he returned from the region of Tyre,
and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee,
in the region of the Decapolis.**

**They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech;
and they begged him to lay his hand on him.**

**He took him aside in private, away from the crowd,
and put his fingers into his ears,
and he spat and touched his tongue.**

**Then looking up to heaven,
he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha!”**

**That is: “Be opened.”
and immediately his ears were opened,
his tongue was released,
and he spoke plainly.**

**Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one;
but the more he ordered them,
the more zealously they proclaimed it.**

**They were astounded beyond measure,
saying, “He has done everything well!
he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”**

Meditation

I’d like to begin with another story:

**Three stone masons in the middle ages were hard at work
when a visitor came along and asked them what they were doing.**

The first stone mason was hard at work, sweat beading his brow.

“I am cutting this stone”, he grumbled.

The second stone mason, though less distraught, responded with a deep sigh, “I’m building a parapet”.

The third stone mason, replied with a radiant face,

“I am building a beautiful cathedral that will glorify God for centuries to come”.

All of life has levels of meaning...

When something happens and some folks say:

what a coincidence!

Others will say, boy am I lucky!

Some will say: I am so blessed!

and still others will be silent.... overcome wonder and awe....

Today’s reading, like all of scripture has many layers of meaning and insight.

So often, many of us read these healing stories on one level...

We think: man! why don’t things happen like that today?!

And that’s is natural: when illness strikes

we automatically hope, beg or bargain for a sudden cure....for a miracle.

And once in a while, it happens.

But when the miracle doesn’t happen like we think it ought,

when situation doesn’t turn out the way we want it to,

we wonder what we did wrong...

we look for someone else to blame.

or we question the what kind of God is God...

and many folks have begun the very basic question:

is there a God or not when ugly things happen to really good people???

Today, Jesus is traveling far outside of Israel.

The people he is curing are not Jews: they're Gentiles.

The man with the reputation as a miracle worker has come to their town...

who wouldn't drop everything for a chance to be cured?!

It doesn't matter to deaf or mute or blind if he is Jew or Gentile...

What they don't yet understand is that Jesus hasn't come to work quick, amazing miracles...

they are only side effects of what he really wants to teach them.

Jesus knew...he lived... the fragility and uncertainty of life.

In his relationship with God, he had personally experienced such a profound intimacy with the Divine Mystery that it radically transformed his mind, his life and his heart...

Now keep in mind,

ancient peoples did not understand the heart as we do today.

We think of the heart as a pump that keeps our blood circulating and our organs and tissues alive.

But in the time of Jesus, the heart was THE organ of divine perception.

It was with and in and through the heart that the human person could understand the things of God.

More importantly, the person could EXPERIENCE the presence of God, and could intentionally offer the power of God.

Notice that the cure doesn't happen as soon as Jesus puts his fingers in the man's ears or his spit on the man's tongue...

Jesus does both those things and THEN he looks up to heaven and sighs...

or as some translations have it: Jesus groans....

**and then, in one of the few instances of ancient Aramaic in the Gospels:
Jesus commands: Ephatha! Be opened!
and then, at that point, the man can hear rightly and speak clearly**

**When Jesus puts his fingers in the man's ears is that the man stops listening
to what is outside of himself.**

**When Jesus blocks his ears from outside sounds, the man is invited, challenged?, directed?
to listen inside of himself.**

And the spit: Spit comes from inside the body. It is water.

It symbolizes the Spirit.

So thus, Jesus takes his Spirit and puts it in communion with the man's spirit.

Now here is the link that pulls it all together, that makes it all happen:

When Jesus looks to heaven and sighs...

**He is completing the circle of relationship between
the man, himself and the God.**

**And as the circle of relationship between them all: God, Jesus and the man
is healed and re-connected... the man is healed:**

NOW the man can hear rightly and speaking clearly.

And so it can be for us. All of us. Anytime.

**It is in the healing of our relationship with the Divine that will allow us
to hear rightly and speak clearly**

and to perform actions of great healing love.

Now that sounds all well and good...

but trust me, speaking and hearing rightly

and performing acts of healing love

aren't necessarily going to gain you any accolades nor
will it necessarily increase your status among certain peoples.

Speaking and hearing the truth may sometimes
bring you into difficult situations.

You may sometimes find yourself wishing that you
did not know what you know.

But once you hear the truth,
once you know the truth, there is no unknowing.

You cannot put the toothpaste back into the tube, so to speak.

Sure... indeedy.... the truth can set you free,
but that does not necessarily mean that life becomes easy and smooth.
Sometimes seeing, hearing, knowing and speaking truth
places us in very uncomfortable situations.

Look at what happened to Jesus!

You know, often times we start out on a spiritual journey
because there is just this itch we cannot scratch.
or perhaps we think that it will bring blessings,
beauty, and bounty into our lives,
or perhaps we think it will assure a ticket into heaven...
or perhaps we hope to be known as good and honorable people...
All of this may or may not happen.

But Jesus did tell us what will happen when we follow his lead:
It will bring a peace the world cannot give...

**It will bring a deep joy knowing that we have helped to relieve
some suffering and loneliness in the world..**

**It will allow us to engage the difficulties we encounter with grace and
a knowing that we do not have to do any of this alone...**

**and at the very least we will know that we have done what we could
with the life we have been given so that when all is said and done,
we have left this world a little bit better for our being here...**

**We have helped to make the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth a wee bit bigger...
we have stood in Kindness,
lived with Compassion,
celebrated with Joy
and we did all for Love.**

And that is a lot to be grateful for! Amen