

XII Trinity 2020
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
St. Mark 7.31-37



We take our five senses for granted. We see...we hear...we taste...we smell...we touch. What happens when one or more of our senses stops working? The miracle of science often gives us the tools we need to live life more fully.

Last week I had the privilege of officiating the Burial Office for a parishioner's mother. One young man who spoke at the service was the deceased woman's grandson. I learned something of this remarkable young man's story. He wore a cochlear implant...the result of hearing loss at birth. Yet he talked about his faith and his grandmother who had just died...and he spoke plainly!

In today's Gospel, we meet a man who is deaf and could hardly speak. He was likely born deaf. Without the ability to hear how words sound...he would have been difficult to understand. He did not have any of the technological miracles like a cochlear implant to make life better for him.

Most people would have gone out of their way to avoid the man. They simply didn't want to be bothered with someone they couldn't understand. The deaf man did have some friends who cared about him...the Gospel tells us they brought him to Jesus and begged him to place his hands on their friend.

Many people absurdly believed the man was deaf and couldn't speak because he or one of his relatives or ancestors had committed some terrible sin...and God was punishing him. Jesus shows by his actions this way of thinking is defective. God wants no one to be hurting. Jesus listened patiently to the man's needs and reached out to make him whole.

Jesus put his fingers in the man's ears...and touched the man's tongue with his own saliva. He looked up to heaven and gave a heavy sigh...expressing the need humanity has for the deep healing that can only come from God.

Jesus said to the man, "Ephphatha," Aramaic for, "Open up." The Gospel doesn't say he could then speak better; it says he could speak PLAINLY. Not only could the man

HEAR, he could SPEAK without any trouble, as if he had been able to all of his life.

Saint Mark tells us Jesus took the man off in the distance away from the crowd to heal him. He wanted the man to be more comfortable and he didn't want the crowd to think this was some sort of circus act. Jesus' healing miracles tell us who he is, but they are never about him. He then ordered the crowd to keep quiet about what they had just seen...of course they ignored his order.

In healing the deaf man who couldn't speak, Jesus made the prophecies from Isaiah that foretold "blind people will see and deaf people will hear", and from Ezekiel, "people will get back the power of speech and be able to talk" come true. Today's technology that helps people live fuller and richer lives is also a blessing from God.

Jesus wants to help us sort things out. He wants to help us deal with the physical, emotional, and spiritual challenges we all experience...and he wants to heal us. Unlike the crowd in today's Gospel, Jesus doesn't tell us to keep quiet about what we experience, or about the miracles big and small we see for ourselves...and yes science and medicine are miracles.

The young man at last week's funeral had a cochlear implant...and he had no problem telling his story. He didn't let hearing loss hold him back from talking about the love he had for his grandmother. He didn't let a hearing impediment stop him from speaking plainly...and everyone listened!

What about us? The Gospel...the Good News...about Jesus Christ...is by its very nature something we cannot keep to ourselves. We must share it with others...we cannot keep it bottled up.

If we truly believe Jesus is who he claims to be...God's Son...if we truly believe he can and will heal our minds, bodies and souls, if we truly believe God loves us and doesn't like to see us suffer and does answer our prayers, then we have to do what the crowd in the Gospel did.

We have to put our senses to work...and never stop telling the story. If we don't tell the Good News about Jesus, who will?

