

XII Trinity 2021  
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
*The Collect St. Mark 7.31-37*



Jesus sighs...God sighs...he hears all of our sighs too...when we're hurting, unhappy, uncertain about life, confused, lonely, sick and desperate for help and healing.

Jesus spent a good portion of his public ministry healing people...sometimes by laying hands on them...sometimes by remote control...from a distance.

Just before the action in today's Gospel...Jesus was near the city of Tyre hiding in someone's house...perhaps hoping for a day off. People had a way of finding out Jesus was in town. A Gentile woman begged Jesus to heal her daughter, who was possessed by a devil.

After some discussion, Jesus said it wasn't right to give the children's food to dogs. The woman replied even dogs get to eat the children's leftovers. Jesus told the woman her faith was great and to go home...she would find her daughter well. Jesus never turned anyone down who asked for his help.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is heading toward Lake Galilee through the territory called Decapolis...or the Ten Town. He is still in Gentile territory and as is often the case he was attracting a large crowd...who heard of his teaching and healing.

Some people brought a man to Jesus who was deaf and could hardly speak. We can surmise the man was born deaf. He would have been hard to understand without having heard words himself. His friends beg Jesus to put his hands on the man and heal him.

Jesus knew the man was uncomfortable with the crowd gawking at him. They were hoping to see Jesus perform one of his miracles...they may not have been all that interested in what he was teaching.

Instead of turning the miracle into a circus sideshow, Jesus took the man away from the crowd, put his fingers in the man's ears, and touched the man's tongue with his own saliva. He looked up to heaven and let out a deep groan...a heavy God sigh...a sign of God's power at work...and said "Ephphatha"...Aramaic for "Open up!"

The Gospel records the man was able to hear clearly and speak without any trouble. He wasn't just able to hear words and speak better...he was able to speak without any trouble. Not only could the man hear, he could speak clearly as if he had always been able to speak, and people understood him. Jesus healed him and restored him to his family friends and the community.

When he healed the man, Jesus made the prophecies from Isaiah...*"The blind will be able to see, and the deaf will hear"*, and from Ezekiel...*"you will get back the power of speech which you had lost, and you will talk with them"*...come true. And Jesus was willing to break barriers. The Gentile woman with the sick daughter and the man who was born deaf and couldn't speak, both lived in Gentile territory. God's power to heal crosses International boundaries.

Jesus reaches out to us too. He invites us to lay all of the things that are bothering us and distracting us and keeping us from living our lives as we should at his feet so he can help us work through them.

In the Collect we call Jesus our Mediator...and he is. Jesus is the only Mediator...the go between...who makes it possible for us to ask God for help in sorting things out when we find everything is out of control.

The Collect teaches us that God is always ready to hear us, even when we don't feel much like praying, even when we try to keep things hidden from him. Jesus shows us that God sighs when we lose our way...like the Lost Son...and rejoices when we find our way back.

The Gospels show us Jesus healed everyone who asked for his help. We continue to pray for our selves and those who are sick and for an end to this pandemic. Our continued prayers for healing are not a test to see if God will answer...they are to strengthen our faith and help us understand God will do what is best for us.

"Open up", Jesus sighs. "Come to me you who are troubled with the cares of the world and I will refresh you". God hears our sighs and he can help quiet them.

