

XII Trinity 2022
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
St. Mark 7.31-37



“Open up”, Jesus said to the man. And the man was able to hear and speak without and trouble.

During his ministry Jesus performed more than 40 miracles. He healed the sick. He changed water into wine, he raised people from the dead. A miracle is an event that occurs outside natural law.

Jesus healed in many different ways. Sometimes he spoke and a sickness was healed. At other times he touched people to heal them...as with the man in today's Gospel.

Mark is the only Gospel writer to record the healing of the man who was deaf and couldn't speak clearly. Jesus has just healed the daughter of a Gentile woman while he was trying to get some rest in the City of Tyre.

The woman begged Jesus to come and heal her daughter who had an evil spirit in her. Jesus told her he had to take care of his own people first and it wasn't right to give their food to dogs. Her response, “Oh that's a good one. But even dogs get to eat the leftovers.” Jesus told her to go home and she found her daughter well.

In today's Gospel, Jesus has left Tyre and is on his way south heading toward the Sea of Galilee through Decapolis...the “Ten Towns”. This was Gentile territory. Many people had heard about his healing miracles and came to him for help. Jesus healed people regardless of who they were or where they lived.

The man in the Gospel couldn't hear or speak plainly. That made him an outcast from society. He would have had trouble finding work and probably didn't have many friends. He apparently had some...they are the ones who brought him to see Jesus.

We take our five senses for granted. The man's inability to hear or speak actually put him in danger. We use our hearing and speech more than we realize to avoid harmful situations. For our friend in the Gospel, things couldn't have been worse.

The Gospel tells us Jesus took the man off alone and away from the crowds. He put his fingers in the man's ears and spat and touched his tongue. He looked up to heaven and gave a deep groan and said, “Ephphatha” (eff-A-tha), “Open up. And the man was able to hear and speak without any trouble. Jesus told the people to keep quiet about what they had witnessed...but they didn't.

Why did Jesus take the man aside instead of healing him in front of the crowd? Some people believed Jesus actually had the power to heal. Others were looking for a magic show. He also has much more work to do if people were to understand his real mission was to die for the forgiveness of sins.

When Jesus healed the man he let out a deep groan. God groans, because sickness is a general sign of man's fallen nature. Jesus power to heal addresses the desperate need of mankind for both spiritual and physical healing.

Isaiah and Ezekiel both talk about the miracles people will see when the Messiah came. “The blind”, Isaiah writes, “will be able to see and the deaf will be able to hear”. “That same day”, Ezekiel writes, “you will be able to get back the power of speech which you had lost, and you will talk with them. In this way you will be a sign to the people, and they will know that I am the Lord”.

Our parish has a long history of the healing ministry. We try to follow the examples given to us by the Apostles. Saint James writes, “Are any among you sick? They should send for the priests to pray for them and rub olive oil on them in the Name of the Lord”.

When the priest lays his hand on someone and prays for healing it isn't a magic show intended to call attention to the priest. We ask for the person to be healed in the Name of the Blessed Trinity and through the mercy of Jesus Christ. Laying on of hands is available to anyone at any time...just ask for it.

Jesus wants us to be whole. Let's ask God to open our hearts and minds and our ears and our mouths, so we too can speak without any trouble and say...

...Jesus has done all things well.

