

JESUS HEALS TODAY

Devotional for September 9, 2018 based upon Mark 7: 24-37

Our Gospel reading for this morning tells of a time when a group of people whom Mark calls "they" brought to Jesus a man who was both deaf and had an impediment in his speech.

The first thing this passage does for me is to raise the question, WHO ARE THE THEY? Whenever I hear someone say "they," I always wonder, Who are the "they"? Who are the "they" who are supposedly saying certain things? Who are these unnamed people who are bringing their friend to Jesus?

Mark does not tell us, so they do not get any credit. And yet they still do it. They are among the millions of people who do what needs to be done simply because it needs to be done and because they care. They would never say, "That's not my job. I've already done my share. Let someone else bring this person to Jesus." They never get thanked during the announcements or in the church newsletter, but they still do it, simply because it needs to be done and because they care. God, may all of us be like them.

The second thing that strikes me is the condition of the man whom "they" brought to Jesus. He was BOTH DEAF AND HAD AN IMPEDIMENT IN HIS SPEECH. I am embarrassed when I think of the times when I have been so deeply focusing on my own, relatively small problems, and then I see someone like the man in our Gospel, who had not just one handicap, but two. At times like those I need to say, Forgive me, Lord. Forgive me for so focusing on my own problems that I have not been attentive and responsive to, in tune with, or even aware of someone else's problems. Forgive me for being like the man who said, "I grumbled because I had no shoes. Then I met a man who had no feet."

Third, I am struck with the way in which JESUS TOOK THIS MAN ASIDE IN PRIVATE, away from the crowd. He responded with great sensitivity to all of this man's needs, including his need for privacy.

And Jesus is sensitive to our feelings and needs. He does not deal with us in front of everybody else, so that we would feel embarrassed and on display. Nor does He relate to us just as part of a crowd. Rather He relates to us individually. He knows our needs, and He cares about our needs – individually. Even though He has everyone else in the whole world to take care of, and even though there are several million other people all talking to Him at the same time as I am talking to Him, He still takes me

aside privately and spends time with me individually. There is nothing cold or rushed about the way in which He does it. We all long for attention like that.

Fourth, JESUS PUT HIS FINGERS INTO HIS EARS, AND SPAT AND TOUCHED HIS TONGUE. All of which reminds us of how much we need warm, human touch. We cannot survive and be healthy emotionally without warm, human touch. From the moment we were born, we have had that need. If that need is not met, something goes wrong.

One thing that many people with terminal illnesses like cancer express is the need to be touched. And not just poked with a needle and have their temperature taken. They need to be touched with a warm, loving, human hand.

Jesus does not heal from a safe, aloof distance. Rather He got right up next to him and touched him. The one who came to Him with a crying need, He touched. Even the leper, the untouchable of all untouchables, much to the horror of the crowds He touched. And when we come to Him, He does not remain at a safe, aloof distance. Instead He reaches out to us and touches us.

Fifth, JESUS LOOKED UP TO HEAVEN AND SIGHED. What a beautiful, beautiful statement that is. When Jesus sees a situation of deep human need, He sighs. Like when E. T. saw that Elliot was hurting so he touched his own heart and said, "Ouch," so when Jesus sees that we are hurting, He looks up to heaven and sighs and then touches His own heart and says, "Ouch."

Sixth, after putting His fingers into the deaf man's ears and reaching out and touching the dumb man's tongue and looking up to heaven and sighing, JESUS SAID, "EPHPHATHA," which means, "BE OPENED."

We read in the New Testament of those marvelous times when Jesus opened the eyes of the blind, restored the lame, and cleansed the leper, and we say, "Jesus, why aren't You doing the same thing today?" We all know people who need healing. And like the unnamed "they" who brought their friend to Jesus, so we would do anything we could if we only knew that our doing so would release God's power to heal.

First of all, we need to realize that Jesus is healing and that Jesus can heal today. Sometimes He heals in spectacular ways. I am sure we all know people who have been healed in a spectacular way. We all know or have heard of someone who had been diagnosed with some kind of terminal, inoperable disease, and then, after God's people prayed, was found to be healed of that disease. God made our bodies able to heal from all sorts of injuries, diseases, and infirmities. Sometimes our bodies need help

from the medical profession, but all that is, is help. Help for the body to help the body do what God made the body able to do.

We need to remember that during Jesus' ministry, He did not heal everybody. And everybody that He healed did eventually die of something else. But still, through His ministry of healing, Jesus gave us a foreshadowing of that time when we will be delivered from all sickness, sorrow, pain, and death, through the resurrection from the dead, which is our hope if we have faith in Jesus Christ. In the meantime, during our lifetimes, God will make our bodies able to heal many times. And there are other times when we experience the love and power and ability of God to heal us emotionally and relationally.

And so, in the meantime, our Gospel reading leads us to ask ourselves, WHERE DOES GOD WANT ME TO BE HIS INSTRUMENT OF HEALING? How do the words "Ephphatha," and "Open up," also apply to us? To whose cries of hurting do our ears need to be opened? To whose need for words of love do our tongues need to be loosened? Who is the person who is suffering from a lack of love that God wants me to love? Who is that scared, resentful, angry, and/or bitter person into whose life I can help bring God's peace? With what specific person – where does God want me to be His instrument of healing?

And then, finally, what did all the eyewitnesses do once they had seen that a man had been healed? Jesus ordered them to tell no one, but THE MORE HE ORDERED THEM, THE MORE ZEALOUSLY THEY PROCLAIMED IT. They were astonished beyond measure. They had seen what Jesus can do. The Good News of what they had seen they simply could not keep to themselves. They had to share it. Too amazed to be silent, their tongues were loosened and they told everybody about it.

What a powerful example they have set for us. For we, too, in so many ways, have been or have seen someone else being healed. Like the crowds, may we be astonished beyond measure and then join with 999 other tongues to sing our Great Redeemer's praise.

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