

The Gifts of Hearing & Speech

The ability to hear and to speak are two great gifts! Like all gifts, they can be taken for granted or even misused. They are both connected. We see this especially in the case of the elderly. When their hearing goes, they tend to retreat into silence. Today, hearing aids help a lot in situations like that, but they do not remove the problem completely. The gospel reading today (Mark 7:31-37) recounts the miraculous healing of a Gentile man who was deaf and had a speech impediment. The latter may have been due in part to the former. This miraculous healing was clearly a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah (first reading, Isaiah 35:4-7) - God comes to save his people; the eyes of the blind are opened and the ears of the deaf are cleared.

Jesus' approach in this healing process is quite unique. Rather than give a word of command as in some other instances, he took the man aside, away from the crowd, and used physical gestures—putting his fingers in the man's ears and touching his tongue. This intimate approach highlights the personal nature of Jesus' ministry. He meets the man where he is, addressing both his physical and spiritual needs.

This miracle has great relevance for us today, not because we are physically deaf or dumb, but precisely because we have these gifts but don't always use them well. Many people are very poor listeners, and many people have difficulty in expressing themselves. It is a reminder to us of our responsibility to be more attentive to one another. Just as Jesus healed the deaf man, we are called to be instruments of healing in our communities. This involves listening actively, engaging in compassionate dialogue, and being willing to confront difficult truths in love.

Furthermore, the miracle not only restored the man's physical ability to hear but also symbolizes a deeper spiritual awakening. It serves as a metaphor for our own spiritual deafness. Many of us struggle to hear God's voice. In a world filled with so many distractions, a person could have perfect hearing, and yet not hear the word of God. And a person could have perfect speech, and be unable to make an act of faith.

Therefore, let's take to heart the message of openness. May we strive to be more attentive to God's voice in our lives and to the needs of those around us. Let us commit to reaching out to someone who may be struggling, offering our support and love. Let us be agents of healing, embodying the compassion of Christ in a world that desperately needs it.

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