

HE MAKES THE DEAF HEAR & THE MUTE SPEAK
23rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 5 SEPTEMBER 2021

The gospel today is focused on a deaf man who also has a tongue impediment. The context in the gospel, like in anyone's life is significant. We learn the deeper implications from understanding the context in Mark's gospel and apply it to our own.

GOSPEL OF MARK 7:31-37

Again Jesus left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis. And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him off by himself away from the crowd.

He put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, "Ephphatha!" — that is, "Be opened!" — And immediately the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly. He ordered them not to tell anyone.

But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it.

They were exceedingly astonished and they said, "He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."



Jésus guérit un possédé muet by James Tissot

Jesus has travelled into Gentile territory, pagan territory, where people do not belong to the Jewish faith, do not consider themselves part of the chosen people of God as the Jews did. He has previously clashed with the Pharisees and scribes who travelled down from Jerusalem to confront him in Capernaum.

They have a blazing argument and he accuses them of hypocrisy, of making trivial issues more important than true worship of God.

They do not hear what he is saying; they have no disposition to hear what he is saying about the kingdom and his role in proclaiming it.

We find him in Gentile territory where some people, we presume pagans, bring a deaf man to him and ask him to heal the deaf man.

What is it that these people possess that the Pharisees did not?

Perhaps their lack of religion or knowledge of the Jewish law made their decision easier to take in bringing him to Jesus. We get the impression that they think Jesus is a miracle worker because there were people with that gift in the country and Jesus shows he has that ability.

It was one of the issues that attracted crowds; his popularity was an issue for the Pharisees.

He touched the deaf man's ears and put spittle from his mouth into the deaf man's mouth and a miracle takes place. Suddenly he can hear. But the miracle is more than hearing, he can speak. He does not need to learn how to talk, he is fully healed.

Once again the outsiders seem to have more openness to Jesus, almost more faith that those chosen people who almost seem to be restricted in what they see and understand from their own religion. At least the Pharisees and scribes who know it the best. This is so ironic.

What follows seems so natural. However Jesus did it, the people are excited and tell everyone about the miracle and the miracle man. Commentators tell us that Jesus wanted them to be silent least he be seen as a miracle worker and not the bringer of God's good news.

But who would not let everyone know that there was a man who was deaf, who was excluded from so much human activity by being deaf who could now take his place fully in society.

And so today, the Church inspired by the gospel continues the healing work initiated by Jesus, not only in the sacraments, especially the sacrament of the sick but through medical facilities.

Many people with disabilities have been left on the margins of society because of their disabilities but we are changing. The [Paralympics](#) shows how we have progressed.

Hopefully our churches welcome the disabled to be a part of the community.

Father Gary Walker SSC

[St Columbans Mission Society](#)

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/090521.cfm>



Paralympics symbol - Spirit in Motion