



Gospel Mk 7:31-37

He makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.

Returning from the district of Tyre, Jesus went by way of Sidon towards the sea of Galilee, right through the Decapolis region. And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then looking up to heaven he sighed; and he said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.' And his ears were opened, and the ligament of his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly. And Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, the more widely they published it. Their admiration was unbounded. 'He has done all things well,' they said 'he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.'

Reflection by Greg Sunter

Strangely, this week's gospel about the healing of a man who was deaf and dumb is less about healing than it is about Jesus being the Messiah. The theme is set up in the first reading when the prophet, Isaiah, describes the signs by which the coming of the Messiah will be recognised: the blind will see; the deaf will hear; the lame will leap; and the dumb will speak. When Jesus healed the man in the gospel story the crowd were admiring of what he had done. They even exclaimed, 'he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.' These words are a direct echo of the Isaiah text – they were recognising Jesus as fulfilling the prophecies of the promised Messiah.

However, the passage also demonstrates to us that Jesus was trying to show the people that he was not exactly the Messiah that many of them were anticipating. This healing story takes place in the region of The Decapolis – south-east of the Galilee region and populated mostly by Gentiles. By travelling in this area and working miraculous healings, Jesus is making the point that his mission is to all people, not just 'the Chosen People' of Israel. He commands the crowd who witnessed the healing to tell no one about it but, filled with the idea that Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for, they broadcast the news. Jesus wanted their silence because he knew that they did not fully understand the sort of Messiah that he was. Only when they understood that this Messiah must suffer and die would he have allowed them to speak of his deeds.

The Living Word

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

5 September 2021

First Reading Is 35:4-7

Then the ears of the deaf shall be opened and the tongues of the dumb speak.

Say to all faint hearts,
'Courage! Do not be afraid.

'Look, your God is coming,
vengeance is coming,
the retribution of God;
he is coming to save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
the ears of the deaf unsealed,
then the lame shall leap like a deer
and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy;

for water gushes in the desert,
streams in the wasteland,
the scorched earth becomes a lake,
the parched land springs of water.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 145:7-10. R. v.1

(R.) Praise the Lord, my soul!

or:

(R.) Alleluia!

1. It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever,
who is just to those who are oppressed.
It is he who gives bread to the hungry,
the Lord, who sets prisoners free. (R.)
2. It is the Lord who gives sight to the
blind,
who raises up those who are
bound down,
the Lord who loves the just,
the Lord, who protects the stranger. (R.)

3. The Lord upholds the widow and
orphan,
but thwarts the path of the wicked.
The Lord will reign for ever,
Zion's God, from age to age. (R.)

Second Reading Jas 2:1-5

Has not God chosen the poor of the world to inherit the kingdom?

My brothers, do not try to combine faith in Jesus Christ, our glorified Lord, with the making of distinctions between classes of people. Now suppose a man comes into your synagogue, beautifully dressed and with a gold ring on, and at the same time a poor man comes in, in shabby clothes, and you take notice of the well-dressed man, and say, 'Come this way to the best seats'; then you tell the poor man, 'Stand over there' or 'You can sit on the floor by my foot-rest.' Can't you see that you have used two different standards in your mind, and turned yourselves into judges, and corrupt judges at that?

Listen, my dear brothers: it was those who are poor according to the world that God chose, to be rich in faith and to be the heirs to the kingdom which he promised to those who love him.

Gospel Acclamation Mt 4:23

Alleluia, alleluia!

*Jesus preached the Good News
of the kingdom*

and healed all who were sick.

Alleluia!

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