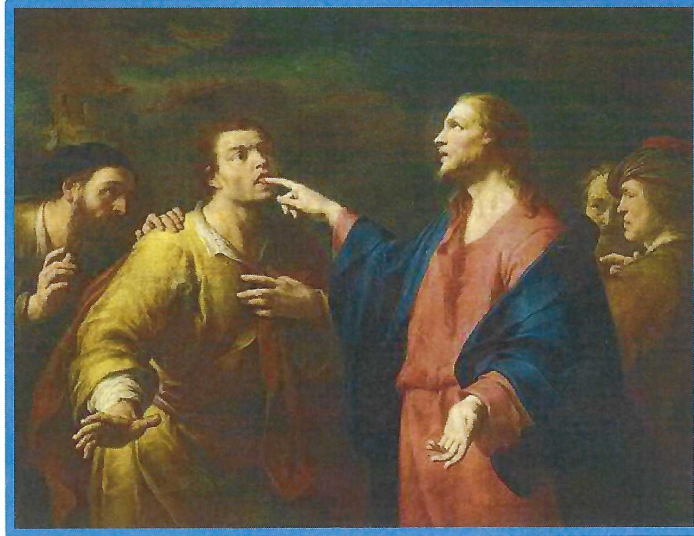


In this week's Gospel we read the account of the healing of a deaf man who had a speech impediment:

"And people brought to him [Jesus] 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." (Mark 7:32-35, NAB)



If we were to spend time meditating upon the actions of Jesus in this encounter with the deaf man, we could learn much about how Jesus operates in our lives today. After all, he is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8)! Let me give just a few examples:

- 1) Jesus responded to those who "brought to him a deaf man" and "begged him" to lay hands on the deaf man. Do we not have people in our lives who need to be touched by God for physical or spiritual healing? Do we truly believe we can bring these people to Jesus in prayer and beg on their behalf that they be touched by God and healed?
- 2) Jesus took the man "off by himself, away from the crowd." Do we not need, at times, to break away from the crowd and to be alone with Jesus in order to receive his healing touch?
- 3) Jesus physically touched his ears and tongue. Do we not need to be physically touched by Jesus through the Sacraments and in hearing His word? (Especially in the Eucharist and Confession!)
- 4) Jesus "looked up to heaven and groaned." Do we not need to see and understand that Jesus is compassionate when we approach him with our needs – he truly and literally feels our pain – he groans on our behalf and brings us consolation?
- 5) Do we not need Jesus every day to open our ears to the truth and enable us to speak plainly – to hear the teaching of Christ, believe it, defend it, and speak the truth with authority and charity?

As we read this Gospel, we pray that by the grace of God Jesus' words and deeds would be more than just a biographical note from the past; rather, may these words and deeds bring us into the presence of the risen Christ that He might take us off by himself away from the crowd, touch our ears and tongue and speak to us: "Ephphatha!" – that our ears would be opened, and our speech impediment removed!

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples