

## Mark 7: 31-37

31 Then Jesus returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. 34 Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' 35 And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'

**Commentary:** Jesus continues to astound people with his ability to heal. What can one say of these accounts? Jesus may have not been unique as a healer in a day and age where medical ignorance allowed many more illnesses to afflict people than would be the case today. But this cannot explain it all. At some level we must admit mystery and awe at the healing power of Jesus - transforming body, mind and spirit in people. But more important in this passage (if one can believe it) is Jesus' resistance to the spreading of the word about him. The 'messianic secret' as it has been called, has puzzled scholars for a long time. Why was Jesus so apprehensive about being talked about? Was it that people would form their impressions and expectations of him outside a spiritual commitment of faith in him? Was it because people's hopes would be attached too closely to popular conceptions about the Messiah rather than the kind of messiahship he came to fulfill? These will be continuing questions for us throughout our pilgrimage through this gospel.

This passage, like others, also raises for us the kind of healing we're looking for and place our hopes in. In this season of Covid-19 and in this tragic time of mass murder, the first place we look for healing is from the outside in: a vaccine, government-imposed social restrictions and bailouts, justice for the victims and compensation for families. Even as these are essential and necessary, what about healing from the inside out? What is it that needs to heal and change in us as persons so that we become different in a positive way in the midst of the crises we face? Jesus was seeking to engage people as a healer from the inside out. That's the kind of messiah he was. He wasn't interested in being some cosmic, divine healer rescuing passive and helpless victims. We all need to be awakened, enabled and empowered to become healers ourselves as we are on a journey of being healed of wounds within which surface in times of crisis. Where do we need healing even as we are called to be healers?

**Prayer:** Healing God... meet us in our pain, our dis-ease, our helplessness... For some of us, locating such things is difficult as it's all so deeply embedded within layers of being 'strong', 'positive', 'upbeat', 'in control', even during a pandemic and a time of national grief... Find us... find me... open up some fresh, healing streams within me... Amen.