

**Jesus Heals the Deaf and Mute Man
(23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)**

Isaiah 35:4-7—The Miracles of God during the New Exodus

1. Coming of God: context is a *new exodus*; “Behold, your God will come” (35:1-4)
2. Signs of God’s Coming:
 - a. “Eyes of the Blind” = “opened”
 - b. “Ears of the Deaf” = “unstopped”
 - c. “Lame” = shall “leap like a hart”
 - d. “Dumb/Mute” = shall “sing for joy”
3. New Exodus: “waters shall break forth in the wilderness” (cf. Exodus 17; Numbers 20)

Psalm 146:7, 8-9, 9-10—The LORD Performs Miracles

1. Freedom: “the LORD (Hebrew *YHWH*) sets the prisoners free” (v. 7)
2. Eyesight: “the LORD (Hebrew *YHWH*) opens the eyes of the blind” (v. 8)

James 2:1-5—God Chose the Poor in the World to be “Rich in Faith”

1. Prejudice: “Show no partiality” towards the wealthy in your gatherings (2:1-4)
2. Preferential Option: God chose “the poor in the world” to be “rich in faith” (2:5)

Mark 7:31-37—Jesus Heals the Blind and Deaf Man

1. Decapolis: the “ten [Greek] cities” north-east of holy land (Gentile Territory)
2. Deaf and Mute man: they ask Jesus to heal him (7:32)
3. Touch of Jesus (7:33)
 - a. “He put his fingers *into his ears*”
 - b. “He *spat and touched his tongue*” (cf.
4. Word of Jesus (7:34)
 - a. *Ephphatha*: Aramaic expression for “Be Opened” (7:34)
 - b. His ears are “opened” and his tongue “released”
5. Messianic Secret: “he charged them to tell no one” (7:36)
6. Proclamation: “the more zealously they proclaimed him” (7:36)
 - a. “He has done all things well”
 - b. “He *even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak*”

Living Tradition: St. Ephrem on the Touch of Christ

Ephrem the Syrian: *That power which may not be handled came down and clothed itself in members that may be touched, that the desperate may draw near to him, that in touch his humanity they may discern his divinity.* For that speechless man the Lord healed with the fingers of his body. He put his fingers into the man’s ears and touched his tongue. At that moment with fingers that may be touched, he touched the Godhead that may not be touched. Immediately this loosed the string of his tongue, and opened the clogged doors of his ears. For the very architect of the body itself and artificer of all flesh had come

personally to him, and with his gentle voice tenderly opened up his obstructed ears. *The One who immediately had given to Adam speech without teaching gave speech to him so that he could speak easily a language that is only learned with difficulty.* (Ephrem the Syrian, *Homily on Our Lord* 10; trans. NPNF 2, 13:309)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. According to the prophet Isaiah, what are the signs of the “coming” of “God” that will take place during the New Exodus?

2. Why does Jesus put his “fingers” in the man’s “ears” and “spit” to touch the man’s “tongue”? Why not just say the word, and heal the man? What is the significance of his touching him?

3. How does the healing of the deaf and mute man reveal the divinity of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark?

For Further Study

1. Mary Healy. *The Gospel of Mark*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. Pp. 146-149.
2. Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, *Mark* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament II; Downers Grove: IVP, 1998), 103-104.