

Gain, Through Loss

September 5, 2021, Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel of Mark 7:31-37

Fr. Brad

Loss has a way of equipping us more for God's loving purposes. It allows us to experience grief, it fortifies within us the ongoing requirement in life to face the challenge of letting go, the challenge to move forward, and enhances our ability to empathize with and accompany the suffering hearts of others. It can nurture within us, a compassionate heart.

Yes, we would all prefer miracles, perhaps a way back to the way things were or to an easier and smoother way forward than we must face in reality. We also know that we can choose to respond to loss with bitterness and anger. But the experience of loss, difficult as it is, also has the power to fortify us in our resolve to carry on in faith and trust and really embrace God's work in the world, to which we, even without our direct knowledge, are well suited for in God's eyes.

Yes, **miracle cures help for a while**, but pretty soon the suffering world has to be faced in its full suffering self. And we inevitably must ask the question of ourselves, 'what is it we desire most in life?' Is it good health, riches, a renowned reputation, never being lonely, as the greatest good - - or is it the knowledge of the intimate presence of God?

Relationship with the divine being, a seeking of the one who is already close - - such an intimate relationship awaits us, the deepest longing of our hearts if we had eyes to see and ears to hear. Such relationship helps us face the worldly loss we must endure and move forward from our grief. It is in making this connection that we become empowered to go out and help give God's love to the world.

The story of Jesus' healing of deaf man with the speech impediment, like the story of the healing the blind man, are **metaphors for the opening up of our hearts and minds** to the recognizing the deeper reality of our connection with all creation. Our world is deaf and blind to so much of what Jesus is trying to help us hear and see.

Jesus invites the deaf man to trust in him, to choose to accept the miracle, to choose to hear the word that Jesus speaks to him - - and to believe. We pray that we come to hear and speak as the deaf man finally could. After all, the better we hear the Gospel ourselves, the better we can speak it. And **we can only SPEAK and LIVE the Gospel to the extent that we have HEARD the Gospel.**

So what can we take from this episode?

We see that the deaf man **actively sought out Jesus** for the healing of his deafness and speech impediment. If we desire healing of our own spiritual deafness we have to first accept that we are indeed spiritually deaf and then, actively seek Him out, asking for healing, for a deepening sense of compassion, a softening of our hearts, and develop practices that nurture a stronger ability to hear His prompting in our hearts.

Note that **Jesus invites the deaf man to accept Jesus into himself, literally.** He puts his finger in the deaf man's ear and spits and touches the man's tongue. Then Jesus looks up to heaven to show the deaf man (who can still see) the source of His power. The love of the Lord heals the deaf man's soul as well as his ears. **The deaf man becomes a part of things again.**

Often, we find the Lord waiting for us in our darkest hours - - waiting for us to turn to Him with trust as did the deaf man. For whatever reason, in our humanness, we too often wait until our darkest times to turn to Him with any depth of sincerity or authenticity.

If we have had such an experience of God's touch already in our lives, may we return to the consolation the Lord provided, recall it, learn to live by it that it may strengthen and reaffirm our recognition of our connectedness with all of God's creation.

Our grateful response to God's promised love for us in our own poverty and disability **is the fruit.**

Actually, there is probably never a time in our life when we should not ask for the healing of the deafness and blindness of our hearts, which is never fully cured once and for all, in this lifetime.

Our mission with Him is, as James says, in our unbiased attentiveness and care for one another.

Remember as well, when **our lips are opened**, they are opened **for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.** This includes speaking out against injustice and not remaining silent because of our people pleasing ways, or the fact that we do not want to rock the boat. It means speaking out for those without a voice to the extent that we can. And of course, it also means taming the tongue.

Once again as we prepare to celebrate this Eucharist, may we return our minds and our hearts to the reality that we are receiving our Lord through word and sacrament into ourselves both literally and spiritually, for the purposes of seeing more clearly, hearing the word of God more clearly, and proclaiming Him with our lives. - - Amen