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by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)

[patrickjmarrin@gmail.com](mailto:patrickjmarrin@gmail.com).

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“The man’s ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly” (Mark 7:34).

*1 Kgs 11:29-32; 12:19; Mark 7:31-37*

There are aspects of the miracle of restoring the hearing and speech to the man in today’s Gospel that show us Jesus’ style and intent. First, he takes the man aside for an intimate and personal encounter free of the sensational interest of the crowd. This is not a magic act or a freak show. Jesus respects the deafmute’s vulnerability.

Secondly, Jesus addresses both issues, recognizing that the man’s speech impediment is connected to his deafness. Having never heard speech, he could not imitate it. By enabling him to hear, Jesus also empowers him to learn to speak. This in turn will restore the man to the community, able to express himself, one of the most important sources of human dignity and social visibility.

School audiologists know that children with hearing problems can easily fall behind in social development, self-confidence and acceptance among their peers. Adults with untreated hearing loss often withdraw into isolation. Humans are social beings who come alive and grow by communicating to form community relationships.

Jesus addresses all these issues in a wholistic way. Mark describes Jesus as the Creator, and, like God at work in the beginning, Jesus touches the man, puts his finger in his ears, spittle on his tongue, then says, “Be opened,” with the authority of God who said, “Let there be light.” Immediately the deafmute can hear and speak plainly.

It is a spectacular miracle and, despite Jesus’ orders, the crowd is astonished and spreads the word. The former deafmute no doubt has a story he will tell everyone for the rest of his life.

Every Gospel miracle has its lessons for us, and these go beyond the specific details of each encounter with Jesus. Each miracle is a sign of the larger, timeless mystery that Jesus came into the world to demonstrate. He incarnated the wholeness we were all meant to possess as children of God, created in the image and likeness of God. While many endure physical loss and limits during their earthly lives, our destiny promises that each of our physical senses foreshadow s the New Creation made possible by Jesus’ death and resurrection. Our sight, hearing, smell, taste and

touch are meant for glory we will possess when we know God in our risen bodies, free of every impediment.

For now, we pray not just to hear but to listen to God's Word so deeply we can speak it freely. We ask to see one another with our hearts, to taste the essence in all created things, to touch the fleeting graces that bind us together in our joys and sorrows, to know the sweet fragrance of God's presence in every act of compassion and forgiveness. This is the wholeness we are called to experience even in this world to prepare us for the fullness of life we will enjoy in eternity.

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