Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“Be opened!” (Mark 7:35).

Twenty-Third Sunday of the Year

Is 35:4-7a; Ps 146; Jas 2:1-5; Mark 7:31-37

The start of a new school year brings back memories of preparing my lesson plans and the classroom I was assigned to so we could begin the learning process on the first day. One of the first questions I asked my students was, “Can everyone see the board and hear my voice?" Visual contact and listening were basic to everything.

As a master teacher with a crucial message, Jesus was also concerned with making sure people could see and hear. Many of his early miracles were about restoring sight and hearing. The coming of the reign of God had to be perceived before it could be welcomed and responded to. In today’s Gospel, Jesus heals a man who was both deaf and mute, but he was also announcing an even greater miracle by revealing who he was.

Restoring hearing and sight was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy that God would come to save his people. By touching the man who was deaf with his fingers and with spittle (and in other miracles, with mud paste), Jesus was acting like the Creator in Genesis. His ministry was the start of the new Creation. The divine image was being restored to the world according to God’s original plan.

Sin had disrupted the unity and integral relatedness of creation. Human selfishness had turned a beautiful and bountiful garden into a barren, lifeless desert. Physical restoration was only the first sign of God’s redemptive plan. Healing moral blindness and spiritual deafness was the real challenge. Those who should have understood God’s will were the front line of resistance to Jesus. Religious leaders and scholars rejected him and his message. The greatest form of blindness and deafness is a closed mind.

Discipleship begins with restored sight and hearing. Every prophet consented to God’s call by saying, “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” The blind Timaeus answers Jesus’ question, “What do you want me to do for you?” with the prayer, “I want to see.” The very first thing he sees is the face of Jesus. He immediately leaves everything he owns on the side of the road and follows Jesus.

We enroll again in the one school that matters, taking our places before the master teacher Jesus. He asks us, “Can everyone see me and hear my voice?” Then we are ready to begin.

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