Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

February 9, 2023
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint



“He has done all things well” (Mark 7:37).

Gn 3:1-8; *Mk 7:31-37*

If you cannot hear, this will alter your ability to speak. In meeting the deaf man with a speech impediment, Jesus first addresses his deafness. He puts his finger into the man’s ears, then spits and touches the man’s tongue. “Be opened!” he commands, and the deaf man can hear, the impediment is removed, and he speaks plainly.

One of the most important daily prayers for Jews, the *Sh'ma,* begins with the word "Hear." The first commandment God utters is, "Listen." If we truly hear, we will love the Lord our God with all our mind, all our heart, all our soul and all our strength. The faithful servant is literally "all ears" to the voice of God, whose Word first calls him or her into existence, naming, loving and guiding them to always orient themselves to the Source.

How true it is that someone who does not listen will also be unable to speak effectively. A leader who does not listen is soon isolated, living in his or her own world. Even kings and presidents find themselves alone because they are surrounded by people who only tell them what they think they want to hear, and they become deaf to reality and in a self-referential echo chamber about the world around them.

Jesus liberates the deaf mute in an intimate and almost primitive way, by putting his fingers in his ears and using spittle to touch his tongue. Mark depicts Jesus like God kneeling to fashion Adam from the clay of the earth and breathe life into him.

Mark's account suggests that Jesus knows this miracle is like creating what did not exist before, bringing a person alive into the community of speaking and listening for the first time. Jesus tries to draw the man away from the crowd so he can work intimately with him. Faith is necessary, not just from the man but for Jesus himself as he calls in Hebrew for heaven to hear his plea: "*Ephphatha*!" (that is, "Be opened!").

We are all called to be evangelists. But before we can announce the Gospel, we must first hear it, not just with our ears but with our hearts. Until Jesus heals us, we are all deaf mutes. Only when he touches us personally do we begin to know him, hear him and obey him. Then nothing can stop us from announcing him to the whole world.