

XII Trinity 2023
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
II Cor. 3.4-11 St. Mark 7.31-37



They say technology is a good thing. Some experts say it is neither good nor bad. It is simply a tool. It all depends on how it is used. The Internet and cell phones have made communication easier. Technology can be used to build up or tear down society. It can bring people together...it can keep them apart. If we consider technology a gift from God...then we need to use it wisely.

Technology in the medical field has led to the development of devices that help people see better, hear better, walk better and live longer. These are all good things. God's gift of wisdom helped medical professionals develop a vaccine to combat the Coronavirus.

In this morning's Gospel, we find Jesus, his friends and a crowd of other people traveling south from Tyre and Sidon toward Lake Galilee. This is Gentile Territory and Jesus has just healed a Gentile mother's sick daughter. He soon encounters a man who "was deaf and could hardly speak". The Gospel tells us some friends "brought" him to Jesus and begged him to lay his hand on him and heal him.

The man faced enormous challenges. None of the medical miracle devices we have today existed then. Finding work would have been difficult. People thought his condition was God's judgment against him for something he or one of his ancestors had done.

Jesus never refused to help someone who came to him for healing. His whole life was about making people physically and spiritually whole. He took the man away from the crowd and prayed...he let out a deep groan...a sign of God's awesome Holy Spirit at work...touched the man's ears and tongue and said in Aramaic, "Ephphata" (eff-FFA-tha)...open up. And the man was able to hear perfectly and speak without any problem.

Why did Jesus take the man away from the crowd? Jesus never performed healing miracles for his own benefit. They were not about him self. They were about Jesus reaching out to those who needed help and he never asked where they were born.

Father Massey Shepherd, author of the *Oxford American Prayer Commentary*, writes the healing of the Gentile mother's sick daughter and the healing of the man in this morning's Gospel were the literal and spiritual fulfillment of two Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Messiah...

...Isaiah wrote, "The blind will be able to see, and the deaf will hear. The lame will leap and dance, and those who cannot speak will shout for joy." And Ezekiel wrote, "That same day you will get back the power of speech, and you will talk."

Saint Paul tells us in the Epistle that we have a new covenant...a new relationship...with God the Father through his Son, Jesus. God our Father shows his love for us through the healing actions of Jesus. Jesus wants us to have wholeness in our lives. The kind of wholeness Jesus wants for us is only possible when we take to heart what the Collect says...

...that God is always more ready to hear than we are to pray; and he is always more ready to give, more than we can imagine or think we deserve.

Jesus promised the Apostles they would also be able to perform miracles in his Name. Saint James in his Epistle writes if anyone is sick, they should call for the priest who will pray over him and anoint him with oil (for healing). The healing ministry is available to anyone in this parish at any time. We pray for healing for our selves and others at every Mass...for those who are in "trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity".

Miracles happen today just as they happened on a dusty road near Lake Galilee to a man two thousand years ago who couldn't hear or speak. They can be miracles of healing and miracles of technology that lead to a better world. Faith and Science are both gifts from God.

The crowd in today's Gospel was told to keep quiet about what they had just witnessed. We are not under the same constraints. God's Holy Spirit empowers us to open our ears and mouths and spread the Good News...*"Jesus has done all things well."*

