

Homily for 23rd Sunday, b cycle September 5, 2021

Friends, if I were to ask you which piece of hardware you value most in your home, you may reply, “my television remote (or clicker). To be in possession of the remote is to be in control of the television. He alone determines what to view on the screen.

One often used button on the remote is the mute button. We see a figure on the screen but are unable to hear his or her voice. All voices are muted. If, say, an annoying guest turns up on a cable news channel, we either switch to another channel or press the mute button. It is our choice.

In the miracle of the deaf man with a speech impediment we can see evidence of the way God acts on our souls. He must first open our hearts so that we may listen to his word. Only then, like the Apostles, can we boast of the mighty works of God.

Clearly in today’s gospel (Mk. 7: 31-37), the Evangelist wishes to emphasize that a prophecy of Isaiah has been fulfilled in the person of the long awaited Messiah. “And the ears of the deaf shall be unsealed”.

But on a symbolic level, the gospel speaks to all those who wish to silence the Word of God. As the prophets of old have said so often, Israel is hard of hearing when it comes to the Law of Moses, God’s revelation.

Today, we are no longer a culture shaped by the Word of God.

We are deaf to the Word of God. Spiritually, we live in a silent world. Far too many are attuned to other voices such as the voice of materialism and moral relativism. In contemporary films and music, the overriding seems to be that the individual is the sole source of truth. Revelation is unnecessary and irrelevant.

What lessons can we derive from today’s gospel?

First, are we hard of hearing when Jesus speaks to us? Do we press the mute button? Do we insist that his voice be silenced? Do His teachings make us uncomfortable?

Second, have we ever asked Jesus to take us away from the crowd and heal us of our spiritual deafness?

All of us have regrets. One of our chief regret is that we failed to listen to whose wisdom we foolishly ignored: our parents, our teachers and friends, and even our siblings. “If only I had listened” is the lament of someone who rues his bad decisions in life. He is haunted by the accusing words of one who gave good advice: “I told you so, but you did not listen”.

Let us consider what are response should be in the presence of those with a deaf heart, those who refuse to listen to a higher voice, that is, the voice of truth spoken by Jesus

We should repeat the prayer of Christ.

“Then He (Jesus) looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, ‘Ephphatha’,--that is--, “Be opened”!” (Mk. 7:34)

And immediately the man’s ears were opened.(Mk. 7:35)

We should repeat the words of Christ as a prayer for the conversion of those in our midst who, for whatever reason, have made the choice to silence Jesus and His prophets, especially those responsible for transmitting the faith, our bishops, the successors of the Apostles.

Let us avoid pressing the mute button.

Jesus has the words of eternal life. (Jn. 6:68)