

Hearing with Hearts, Not Ears

Intro. Most of us have days when we need a short break from whatever work we do. If I can, when I am stressed out or tired, I take a few minutes and read a chapter of a book or article. Or listen to good music. Or watch the alligator in the pond across the street from my house. The Lord felt the same way occasionally. After arguing with the scribes and Pharisees about bread from heaven and handwashing, he crossed the border into Gentile territory where they wouldn't follow him. It might make them unclean to associate with Gentiles.

I. Obviously, word of the Lord's healing power preceded him even in non-Jewish country. People brought a friend and asked for healing. Most of the time, the Lord did not seek out people to heal; they

found him. The Lord showed his compassion in several ways. He took him away from the crowd possibly to avoid embarrassing the man. The Lord *touched* him as he often did, maybe to dispel (get rid of) the idea that some people were thought to be sinners. The gestures of touching the affected areas, praying and even the spitting were common to healing in that time. We may recoil from that, but we do similar things today. Parents touch and often *kiss* the cuts and scrapes of their children. When we burn our finger or hit it with a hammer, we often put it our mouth to make it feel better. Baseball and football players often spit on their fingers, not for healing but for a better grip on the bat or ball.

The Lord healed the person physically in a very personal and gentle way not unlike how we are healed of *our* physical hurts. What about his heart;

was that healed? Maybe he was angry at God or others for how he was treated due to his deafness. Hopefully his heart was healed too. One reflection shared with me: people - deaf **and** hearing - “can experience spiritual deafness in not hearing God’s word and acting upon it or [the] inability to speak preventing us to proclaim God’s message.” [R. Riehm]

Concl. The healing in the gospel echoes the prophesy of Isaiah in the first reading, made during a dark time of oppression of the Israelites. The sign of the deaf hearing and others was a signal of the Messiah’s arrival, although the Gentiles probably didn’t recognize it as such. At least they were open to the Lord and put more faith in him than some others. God speaks to our heart, whether we are hearing or deaf. We can certainly try to block him

out by plugging our ears or not thinking about him. But God can out-wait us; he is patient. **He always hears us; the danger is we might lose our ability to hear *him*. It would be a terrible thing to make ourselves deaf to God’ Word.**

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