

## **Pentecost 16B – Lectionary 23 – 09/08/2024**

In my husband's psychology practice, many had the diagnosis of Mental Retardation, now known as Intellectual Disability. Most of them were high functioning to the point, that one asked my husband, I hear people saying that I am mentally retarded, "What does that mean?" My husband told him that is was a level of functioning, but in reality, he told him that all of have disabilities.

I believe that this is true. In a sense our weaknesses are disabilities. This is when we really need to ask for help. We will never be able to do everything well, even though sometimes we think we can. The older we get the more we realize that we can't do everything also. God did not create us to do everything well.

It took a lot of strength for this Gentile woman in our Gospel lesson to come before a Jewish man who was known for speaking out and healing to ask for help. The woman knew her daughter needed help, and she couldn't take care of her. She did believe that Jesus could heal her daughter. Our text does not state that her daughter was even present, but the woman bowed down before Jesus and begged him to heal her daughter and cast out the demon that was in her. I would like to define begging as asking from deep in her heart. A better word may be entreating.

I'm not sure that she was expecting Jesus' answer. Jesus basically told her that the Jewish people were first. She reminded him that children held no position of authority. C. Clifton Back says it this way, "Sir, even house-dogs under the table scarf down the kids' bitty scraps. She reminded Jesus of his teaching that there were no distinctions between Jews and Gentiles in God's eyes.

Then Jesus granted her request. The woman went home and found her daughter lying on the bed and the demon was gone. The woman was persistent and as a mother she was willing to do almost anything for her daughter. Whether Jesus was testing the woman or needed to be reminded, we don't know, but his focus changed in the next part of the Gospel lesson for today.

Jesus continued to travel and heal. People brought him a deaf man who had a speech impediment. Thus, we have a person with two recognized disabilities. This is a very common pairing. When we can't hear, it is hard to produce sounds until one learns how.

The people entreated Jesus to lay his hands on him and heal him. Jesus chose to take him aside, away from the crowd. Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears, and he spit on his tongue. Jesus looked up to heaven and said "Ephphatha", that is "Be Opened". Immediately his ears were open, his tongue was released, and he

spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one, which was common in the Gospel of Mark.

Now, if anyone did this today, what would we really think? How would we react? Has anyone ever seen this done? Let alone, the person being healed. Don't you think it would be kind of weird? Maybe that is why Jesus took the man away from the crowd.

The crowd was probably looking for some show, to see if Jesus really was this man sent from God. I tend to visualize things, and this is quite different. How many of us want to run out and tell people about this story? We are told the whole story. The crowds may not have seen the actual act, but only the healed man.

Even though Jesus told them not to tell anyone, they did any way. The more he told them to stop the more people they told. Jesus often told his disciples not to tell others also because he did not think they would fully understand until after his death and resurrection. The people were astounded beyond measure and were saying he did it and did it well. He gives hearing to the deaf and speech to the speechless.

The crowds were excited about what Jesus had done. In both healing stories, Jesus was recognized as the healer. The women and the people entreated Jesus to heal. They recognized that they could not take care of these issues. Recognition is always step one.

They realized that it was out of their control. There is that word control. We all desire control over things and others, but in reality we don't have it. People with disabilities realize what they don't have control over in their own lives and make adaptations. Their first step in moving forward is recognizing it and not letting it have control over them.

When we apply this to us and if we believe that each one of us has at least one disability, then our first step is to recognize it. God did not make us capable of doing everything or why would we need each other let alone God.

There is a great deal that we can learn from people with recognizable disabilities, such as blindness, deafness or an issue with mobility. In order for them to function in life, it first takes recognition that their disability does not have control their life. It also takes persistence such as the woman in our gospel lesson today.

As followers of Jesus, when we are struggling with something, do we entreat Jesus to help us? Do we believe that Jesus can help us? But here is the thing, if we entreat and believe, are we willing to receive his answer. How easy is it for us to entreat Jesus to open our hearts and minds to his will?

Whenever we do this, there will be changes. The woman and the people expected changes. The daughter's and the man's life were definitely changed. The woman and the crowds' lives were also changed. Mark tells us the crowds couldn't contain their excitement and they kept sharing with others Jesus' work.

Jesus in Mark challenges us to be persistent in asking Jesus to help us in our weaknesses, in the things that plague our minds. Are we willing to have our hearts and minds opened to see and hear new things? Jesus always stands ready to do this.

There is a great deal of miscommunication in our world today. It is difficult to see and hear what God in Jesus Christ wants us to. Every one of us sitting in this room has weaknesses or disabilities. Do we know what they are?

Are we willing to come and entreat Jesus to help us as the woman and the people did who brought the man for healing. In these cases, they were physically healed. Healing does not always come in this form.

Sometimes healing comes in the form of being able to rest in Jesus and let go of the old in order to see and hear the new that God in Jesus Christ has in store for us as individuals and as a community of faith.

Thus, our challenge is to first recognize what we need Jesus' help with and then entreat Jesus to show us what changes that he is asking us to make. I would define this as a healing.

Let us pray: Healing Jesus, we get so easily caught up in trying to have control of things and other people. We are taught by our culture that we can do everything by ourselves. We know this is not true. We entreat you to open our hearts and minds to be able to see where we need you. May your Spirit humble us to rest in you and receive your help and be healed. In Jesus name, Amen.