

Blessed Trinity Catholic Community + Spirit of Christ Mission
Twenty-third Sunday Autumn Ordinary time ~ September 9, 2018
Isaiah 35:4-7a; Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10; James 2:1-5; Mark 7:31-37
Homily ~ Fr. Ed Hislop

Isaiah envisions what we all long for today, in our world, our country and certainly in our Church: A cure, a healing, a new hope: that which has been hidden, finally revealed and seen; the ones who have been silenced by fear in their heart unable to speak so deep is their pain finally speaking, singing a song of truth, longing for healing, accountability and a truly human life.

Could it be that those long silenced voices with hearts from the days of childhood frightened for too many years and dressed in the shabby clothes of cruel exploitation are the ones of whom James speaks today? They are in our midst—the child abused in church and in so many other places, the adult bearing those childhood wounds, the immigrant and refugee, the child separated from mother and father in continuing acts of cruelty done in our name. They are finally seen, no longer able to be told, “Stand there,” or “sit at my feet.”

Now they are seen, now they are heard, now they are here. No longer are those with gold rings and fine clothing able to ignore or silence them. They are, James tells us, heirs of God’s house, at home in God’s dwelling.

The song of the psalmist echoes through our church today in every place; the music moves through our country and in the midst of every child, family, person and community who suffer the abuse of exploitation, hatred, separation and division: *“The Lord loves the just, the Lord protects strangers and sets captives free...but the way of the wicked he thwarts.”*

But now Jesus is seen walking through the world and church today. Maybe it is all of us brought to him...the Church here and in every place: we who for too long could not hear and so could not speak.

We could wonder who recognizes our “deafness and speech impediments...?” The man in the Gospel does not come to Jesus on his own....he is brought. Who has noticed what we do not hear; who longs to hear us speak? Who is bringing us to Jesus? Could it be those whose cries we hear anew today? The frightened children, the abused, the judged, the separated, the stranger, the refugee and the many who long for justice and a safe home? Will we go with them, us and the whole church?

If we do the fingers of Christ will be put into our ears; the spit of his mouth from which comes the healing word of hope, and new life, will touch our tongues, and we, you and me, all of us here and in the whole church will hear ominous words which can restore hope, renew faith, change our heart and our ways: **“BE OPENED.”** Be opened to truth; be opened to care; be opened to change; be opened to hear. Be opened to believe even in moments of doubt and scandal. Be open to demand an account, but be open as well to “love your enemies. Be open, so as not to condemn, persecute and suspect the many for the egregious and terrible acts of some; be open to see that human weakness and evil deeds disfigure the Body of Christ, the Church. But be open as well to see and remember that we gather here to converse with God, to pray for the world, to give thanks, remember and to eat and drink of Christ himself. Here we are

nourished to go forth to be strong and fear not, still to sing and to do the work of turning thirsty ground into springs of water, to be the voice of the children, the heart of the oppressed, the protector of the stranger and the voice of those whose hearts are frightened.

Here we are empowered and commissioned to be the church; and to be ourselves a cure, a healing and a new hope.

Where else shall we go? The fingers of Christ are in our ears and the spit of his mouth is on our tongues. Christ has done all things well: He has opened our ears and so we speak.

