



This week's Revd. Morris' message: ***Where in our lives may we be Divinely called to 'open up'?***



In today's Gospel, Jesus demonstrates that his mission is indeed for not only the 'chosen ones' but also, and particularly, those who find themselves as 'outsiders'.

We can cringe at Jesus' exchange with the Syrophenician woman ..this is not the 'inclusive and welcoming' Jesus approach that we would expect? Some scholars opine that Jesus was testing her to bring forth her courage and faith. Others believe that this is an occasion where Jesus 'changes his mind' due to the woman's insight, faithfulness and courage. Whatever occurred, God be praised, she was embraced by Jesus and her daughter was healed despite being so far outside of a Jewish Rabbi's permitted scope of activity - namely, to engage with and minister to Jews only and definitely not engage with and support an unaccompanied single woman.

Jesus then has a puzzling engagement with a deaf and speech impaired man from the *Decapolis* [or 'The 10 towns'] . These towns were essentially a separate Greco-Roman City league with a minority of Jewish residents. It was an area of cultural conflict [Jewish versus Hellenistic Roman Culture] where Jesus sometimes travelled. However, His ministry bore fruit, since after the fall of Jerusalem, it became a fertile ground for the growing Christian Church.

How strange to our minds are Jesus' actions. Why touch his ears and put spittle on his tongue? What about the transmission of germs? *Yuk!* Commentators note that the use of spittle was common in healing practices in both the ancient Jewish and Greek communities. Jesus also is recorded in using spittle in his healing ministry on other occasions [e.g. see Mark 8:23 and John 9:6] Perhaps, if you were incapable of communication, you would understand that Jesus was going to cure you if you were gently taken aside, your ears touched and the common spittle healing practice was enacted with you?

When John the Baptist wanted to know if Jesus was 'fair dinkum', Jesus pointed to Isaiah's Prophecy concerning the Messiah and his miraculous healing and restoration of the blind, deaf, lame, mute and even the dead. [see Matthew 11:5]. So these healings

were foretold long ago and were incontrovertible evidence of the truth of Jesus's Messianic claims.

So what does this all mean for us today?

These 2 unusual healings challenge us to ask some confronting questions of ourselves.

I wonder :

1. Which 'outsiders' do we know who may be seeking healing and reconciliation with their communities but are being subjected to prejudices which keeps them at 'arms length'? Jesus broke 'the rules' of His society and faith traditions to minister to them. ***Do we have the courage and conviction to do likewise?***
2. Which areas of our lives are currently 'closed' need to be 'opened' by Divine Grace? Where could we currently be ***spiritually deaf and mute. Are we willing to ask Jesus to open these areas in His service and to His Glory?***

Gospel reading: Mark 7: 24-37

Some resources to dig deeper: <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-23-2/commentary-on-mark-724-37-3>; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decapolis> ; <https://notaboutme1151.wordpress.com/2020/07/25/nameless-deaf-man-in-decapolis/>

Upcoming Parish Activities: **Midweek service** : Wednesday 10:30 a.m; **Meditation Group** @ 6:30 pm; **Every Sunday Guitars and Ukulele lessons** at 3 p.m; **Bible Study** Wednesday at 7 pm and Friday at 10:30 am; **Next Sunday:** Bishop's visit and Patronal Festival

Next weeks readings: ***Nia*** : Proverbs 3:1-6; Ps 19:1-6; ***Judith*** : Ephesians 4:1-14; Matthew 9:9-13

Parish Directory:

Revd Morris Rangiwai: 0449 557 351; morris.Rangiwai@anglicanchurchsq.org.au.

Wardens: Heather Walker: 0411556 279; hezzie16@gmail.com

Randal Dennings: 0408 878711; randaldennings@gmail.com

Bank Details: Holland Park Anglican Church Anfin BSB 704 901; Acct: 00000760.

Parish website : <https://www.stmatthewshollandpark.com/>

Parish Private Facebook site : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/292308270851142> ;

Public Site: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556418523933> ;

Tipper's Treasure's Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559040358754>

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY:

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge their continued spiritual connection to country and surrounding land, sky and water. We pay our respect to their Elders, past present and emerging and pray that we may continue to learn from and nurture one another in the spirit of Reconciliation.

