

**TWENTY-THIRD
SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

YEAR B

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Open our ears
to hear your teaching,
Lord God,
and give us the words
to tell others
about your wonderful love.
Make us strong
in doing what you command
so that others, seeing us,
may come to know
that you have saved us,
through Jesus, your Son,
who lives with you
forever and ever.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

The focus of our readings is God's love and salvation expressed in physical healing. The readings show God's concern for those who have no hope apart from miraculous intervention.

Isaiah images the redemption of God's people in the wonderful, gratuitous healing of the blind, the deaf, the crippled and the mute.

Our passage from Mark reveals Jesus as the fulfillment of that promise. Jesus himself is redemption. The man who is deaf and mute experiences this in his gift of hearing and speech. Like all miracle stories, it is a sign of ultimate salvation.

Just as those in physical need look to God for healing, so, too, we look to God for the free gift of salvation.

FIRST READING: *Isaiah 35:4-6*

This is a reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Our God says:

“Have courage! Don't be afraid!
Your God is coming with justice
to reward and save you.”

Then those who are blind, will see.
Those who are deaf, will hear.
Those who are crippled, will jump like deer.
And those who cannot speak, will sing.

This is the Word of God.

RESPONSE: *Psalm 146*

RESPONSE:

I praise you, O God, for your faith - ful love. I

praise you, O God, for all that you do.

VERSES: [repeat by singing or clapping rhythm] to Response

1. You	free	the	op-pressed	and	save	the	poor.
2. The	hun - gry	are	fed,	the	blind	can	see.
3. †	Hap - py	are	all	who	hope	in	you.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

(Fingersnap) etc.

1. Je - sus said: "Eph - pha - tha, Eph - pha - tha
 2. Je - sus said: "Eph - pha - tha, Eph - pha - tha

(Clap)

1. — be o - pened!" And the man could
 2. — be o - pened!" Al le

1. hear and talk... And the man could hear and talk...
 2. lu - ial... Al le - lu - ial...

GOSPEL: Mark 7:31-37

This is a reading from the Gospel of Mark.

Jesus went to the area of the Ten Cities,
near the Sea of Galilee.

Some people came to him
bringing a man who was deaf
and could not talk.

They begged Jesus to heal the man
by laying his hands on him.

Jesus took the man away from the crowd,
by himself.

He touched the man's ears and tongue.

Then he looked up to heaven and prayed.

He said,

"Ephphatha!"

This word means:

"Be opened."

Immediately the man could hear and talk.

Jesus told the people
not to tell anyone what happened.

But they were filled with wonder
and amazement

and they went around telling everyone,

"This man, Jesus, does everything well!

*He can even make deaf people hear
and those who cannot talk speak."*

This is the Good News of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

Before the first reading, explain to the children that the people of Israel were in exile. They had been captured and were living a long way from their home with those who had captured them. They wanted nothing more than to be freed to return to their home.

After the reading, ask the children to whom God was speaking. Ask them why God spoke especially about the blind, the deaf and so forth. Help the children understand that it is often those who are most helpless in the world who know they need God.

After the Gospel, ask the children to recall the story. If they have difficulty recalling, you might help them with questions such as:

- Where was Jesus?
- Who asked Jesus to cure the deaf man?
- What did Jesus do? Help them recall the details:
 - took him alone,
 - touched his ears and tongue,
 - prayed,
 - said, "ephphatha."
- What does "ephphatha" mean?
- How do you think the man felt?
- Why do you think Jesus told the people not to tell anyone?
(see Introduction to Mark)

Help the children see that there are other forms of "deafness."

We can refuse to listen to what Jesus wants to say to us.

We can ask Jesus to touch us and say "Ephphatha!"