

# TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year B

Isaiah 35:4-7a  
Psalm 146:7, 8-9, 9-10  
James 2:1-5  
Mark 7:31-37

## Gathering

*(An unlit candle, a bible open to this week's gospel and pictures of people listening to and/or speaking with one another are arranged on a table in the gathering place.)*

To hear, to really hear. Whether we are with others or before God, listening with attention is what it's all about. Jesus' saving ministry is expressed in this week's gospel in his gift of hearing to the deaf man.

## Prayer

*(The candle is lit. The leader invites members to be attentive to God's presence. After a time of quiet, the leader invites members to take turns praying a line of the prayer that follows.)*

- I: Praise the Lord!
- II: Praise the Lord, my soul!
- III: I will praise him as long as I live;
- IV: I will sing to my God all my life.
- V: He always keeps his promises;
- VI: He judges in favor of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry.
- VII: The Lord opens our ears to receive the good news.
- VIII: The Lord sets prisoners free, and gives sight to the blind.

- IX: He lifts those who have fallen; He loves his righteous people
- X: He protects the strangers who live in our land;
- XI: He helps widows and orphans, but takes the wicked to their ruin.
- All: The Lord is king forever. Your God, O Zion, will reign for all time. Praise.


*Members sing, "How Can I Keep from Singing." Song may on the Internet.*

## HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

*(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)*

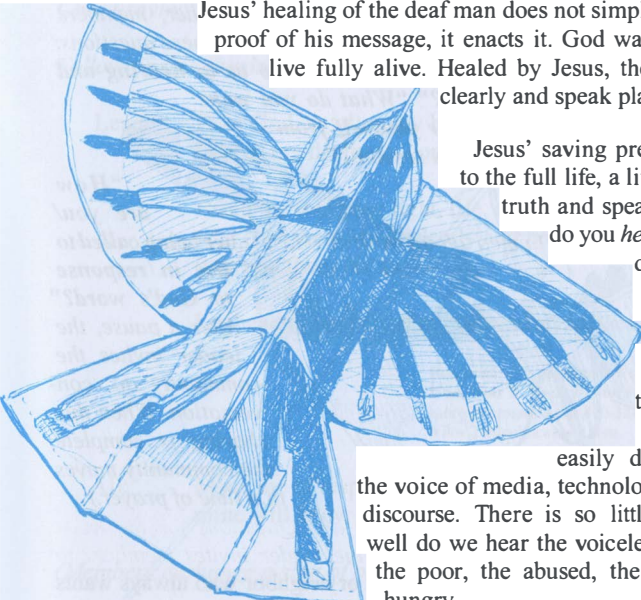
*When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. The leader then poses these questions: "What draws you to this gospel?" "Where do you resist this gospel?" The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After additional time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)*

### Reflection

aid the little lamb to the shepherd boy, do you *hear* what I *hear* ringing through the sky shepherd boy, do you *hear* what I *hear*? This Christmas song announces the birth of Christ to the world through the gentle night wind whispering to the lamb who conveys to the shepherd boy what it *heard*. The shepherd boy tells the king a child is born who will bring goodness and light.

Hearing is a gift given to most at their birth. It allows us to relate to our surroundings and communicate with others. The loss of one's hearing is devastating. And it can also affect one's ability to speak. Loss of hearing can uniquely cut one off from others. It threatens to isolate and weaken one's

connection to the world about. We think of hearing, not only as a physical ability, but also as a spiritual capacity, an ability to *hear* on a deeper level, at the level of heart and soul. To *hear* beyond the words calls for attention, patience, and reflection so as to appreciate what is most significantly being said, shared.



Jesus' healing of the deaf man does not simply serve as some proof of his message, it enacts it. God want his people to live fully alive. Healed by Jesus, the man can hear clearly and speak plainly.

Jesus' saving presence opens us to the full life, a life that *hears* the truth and speaks it. How well do you *hear*? How plainly do you speak?

In our culture, our ability to hear the truth of things is so easily drowned out by the voice of media, technology and political discourse. There is so little silence. How well do we hear the voiceless in our world, the poor, the abused, the depressed, the hungry.

“Be opened,” says Jesus. *Hear*, and so receive the gift of the other. Speak your gift to the other that all may live a full life. Receiving and giving affirmation we are the touch of God's transforming, healing love.

“Do you *hear* what I *hear*,” says the lamb. What do you *hear*? How attuned are you to the Spirit of God whispering in your life?

### Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ Tell of a time when really listening to someone made a difference in the person's life or your own.
- ◆ How do you know when you are hearing Christ in his Spirit speaking to you?

- ◆ What do you need to do to more effectively *hear* the people in your life? Who are you filtering out and why?

## HEARING THE GOSPEL'S LORD

*(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: "What do you hear Christ saying to us in hearing and sharing his word?" "What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?"*

*"How are you/we being called to live in response to God's word?" After a pause, the leader invites the community to conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.*

### Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Take some time to hear that parishioner or neighbor who always wants to talk your ear off. Listen with new ears for the need the other is to fill as he/she goes on and on. Respond with grace.
- ◆ It is so easy to take those closest to us for granted. Be more attentive this week to friends and family members.
- ◆ Set aside ten minutes a day this week for reflection and prayer. Sit in quiet. Let life slow down. Let your racing thoughts come to a halt for a bit. When you have settled into the silence, let your prayer simply be: "Speak, Lord, your servant listens." *Hear* the word of the Lord as it may come to you in the quiet.

### Prayer

*(After a brief pause, the gospel of the week is re-proclaimed by a member of the community. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these*

questions to the members: **“What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?”** **“What do you say to him in response?”** The community pauses for a full five, perhaps even seven, minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members without additional conversation simply to mention a word or two or a brief thought that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally.

*Following this sharing, the prayer continues as follows.)*

Leader: Dear God, so often my hearing is impaired...  
God of my deafness, come to me.

Bring me into your light, life, and love by way of people  
who hear your words clearly and both translate and  
interpret them for me.

Let healing happen in my life and their lives because I heard.

Reprinted with permission from **Awakening to God, Year B**. Twenty-Third Publications. For more information call 800-321-0411 or visit [www.23rdpublications.com](http://www.23rdpublications.com).

All: Move me to respond so that those whose lives intersect with mine will know your healing transforming love. Amen.

*(Members exchange a sign of peace.)*