

Sermon Trinity 12 Mark 7. 31-37 30 August 20

It is lovely to be back with you all again this morning having been away for a couple of weeks. My family and I were lucky enough to be able to get away and had a lovely week staying in the Lincolnshire Wolds. I know not everyone has been able to get away, with most holiday plans having had to be shelved and I know that for some of you, even though you haven't been able to get away, have enjoyed socially distanced day trips to the botanical gardens or visits to family and friends. We all need some time away for some rest and recuperation, a time of restoration.

And in the gospel reading, that we have just heard, Jesus had been away, possibly trying to keep his head down after having had a run in with the Jewish authorities. He had gone away to the region of Tyre, on the Mediterranean coast, where he met a woman who asked for her daughter to be healed. And now he is back in the Lake Galilee region but in the gentile areas, away from the strict Jewish authorities. Maybe he is still trying to keep a low profile by steering clear of the Jewish areas, but somewhat inevitably he is unable to escape notice and he is called upon to heal a man who has been deaf and dumb from birth.

And he does so quickly but not without first taking the man away from the crowds. Jesus heals the man – in a way that to us now appears very strange especially given all the social distancing regulations, putting his fingers in the man's ears, spitting, and touching his tongue. But, however strange the method the man is healed.

The man is healed of his deafness and his speech impediment but by being healed of his physical problems he was also restored to his community because he would have been an outsider, an outcast, he was not able to fully participate in society. By being healed, the deaf man was now able to communicate once more, Jesus was restoring the man to the community.

Over the next week or so, our children and young people will be restored back to their school communities. Some haven't been in school since lockdown began in March although may have seen their classmates online. It may be an exciting time or an anxious time, or perhaps a bit of both. But finally, schools will be open once more,

all be it with lots of dos and don'ts, but those communities will be restored once more.

And we are hoping to slowly restore folk who have not be able to attend church online to our community as they feel able to. Zoom and YouTube has been wonderful in allowing us to meet together and to worship but I know it is not quite the same as meeting up 'in the flesh'. Since July some of us have been able to come to church and over the coming weeks and months, we hope that those who are fearful will be able to gather again in church in person – restoring our own community. But with all the guidance I know that not everyone of course will be able to attend in person and when back to church may not be able to do some of the things that they were able to do before lockdown because of all the ongoing restrictions, but slowly our community is restored although I don't think things will ever be the same again and don't worry we will continue to livestream our services for the foreseeable future. Is there someone you know that you could invite back to church – perhaps online rather than physically in person? Is there someone you know who needs to be restored to the church family?

But we are all in need of Jesus' healing touch in our lives – we are all in need of being healed and restored. I think that over the last six months most of us have experienced pain and loss; the pain of not seeing friends and families; the loss of not being able to celebrate life events with family and friends – births, birthdays and graduations; the loss of not being able to grieve loved ones who have died in the way that we would have wanted; the frustration and worries as exam results were published and then many changed again; the loss of jobs or careers suddenly on hold. Many losses and much pain that we have experienced

So today and in the week ahead let's pray that through the Holy Spirit we might receive Christ's healing touch to begin some of the healing that we need and then when we have been restored, individually and as a community, we can move forward and tell others of the good news that Jesus brings.