

Carol's reflection – Sept 12 2021

It was when I opened the car door to put in the groceries that I looked down and saw it, and I thought, 'well that's amazing'.

Maybe I should not start there.

Jeff and I have been on holidays with our family. We had a lovely place by the lake in Killarney, and had decided before we went, that we wanted to support the businesses in the small town, and were regularly visiting the grocery store – and the bakery – for supplies. Being on holidays meant a full week away from the computer – a real gift.

But a few things stayed with me. We had set the scripture readings for the month before we left, so I had the verses of the gospel rolling around in the back of my mind. Jesus the healer, opening ears and releasing speech.

That was in my mind when I opened the car door and glanced down, and saw an awfully new looking hearing aid. It was amazing because I was thinking about Jesus who healed the man who was deaf!

And there was this new hearing aid, lying on the ground as if it had been dropped by someone getting into their car. In this pandemic day and age when we all try not to touch anything unnecessarily, it was pretty clear that it was not a good thing to leave this lying on the pavement.

I took it to the clerk in the store, who took it carefully and put it into a safe place.

When I thought about it, I noted that the new tiny little hearing aids do not appear to have any identifying marks on them – no initials marked on them to help us to know to whom to return them if they are lost. And, with masks looping behind our ears, it is very easy to see how one might go astray.

So, how will the lost be found? Will it be on the owner of that hearing aid to try to imagine back where it went missing and try to find it? Or perhaps the store manager will post a sign. Or perhaps there will be some other way to bring the two together.

Hearing loss is so common, and so many people have hearing aids. The Canadian Association of the Deaf uses the number of one in ten to guesstimate the impact of hearing loss on our society. And, we all know that hearing loss does not know any boundaries. Anyone, and everyone, might be affected at some point. A hearing aid is not a cure for hearing loss, but it makes a big difference in someone being able to stay in touch with family and friends – it makes a big difference in a community.

Perhaps it is because hearing loss is so common that it is easy to relate to today's story. People know now, and people knew then others with hearing loss. Some of us have hearing loss. And, sometimes we struggle to connect with others if we cannot hear or speak clearly. And, if we cannot hear well, or speak clearly, communication can be difficult. And communication is a cornerstone of community. And, community is a cornerstone of God's kin-dom – where everyone matters.

Let's go back to the Gospel. Jesus is travelling in foreign territory, and his reputation as

a healer is proceeding him. We are told:

“They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him.”

Friends bring someone for healing. Friends beg Jesus to help. And Jesus does. He takes him aside in private --- and heals him. And then Jesus tells the friends not to tell anyone – and on this they do not listen, they were astounded beyond measure and proclaimed the story zealously. That part of ‘Don’t tell anyone’ is pretty common in the Gospel of Mark – it is a secret – to be revealed later – that Jesus is the Messiah – but it doesn’t seem to be a secret at all. And here, the people of the Decapolis – the 10 foreign towns, are amazed by the healing and all that Jesus can do, and all that Jesus is, and they preach and proclaim!

In providing healing for one person, Jesus is also providing healing for a community. And it is not a Jewish community, they are in Greek territory, the ten towns -- the Decapolis. And even though it was not very far away, it was a place that was under appreciated – it was a place to travel through, never a place to go to. But Jesus is the means of God’s grace. Jesus is about healing everywhere. He has compassion.

In the Gospel, it was not just Jesus who had compassion – the friends were filled with compassion when they brought the deaf person to Jesus.

What a gift it is to have compassion. What a gift it is to care for others. And, what a gift it is that we need now.

This pandemic has affected everyone. It has affected every place. And, if we are going to move forward we will need to nurture our own compassion towards others. We need to care about healing every community – not just our own. We need to care about keeping people as safe as possible. We need to share the Gospel of love.

In the coming days and weeks you will hear more about the re-opening plans for TMUC, and you are invited to keep us in your prayers. These are not easy days.

But the call of the Gospel is clear. Live hope. Live care for one another. Live grace. Live compassion.

And, in doing so, we live as God calls us to live. Let us be alive in love!