

**Mark 7: 31-37; “The Opening of our Ears”, Sermon # 44 in the series –
“Astonished at His Teaching”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
On October 18th, 2015, in the Morning Worship Service.**

There are lessons to be learned from every one of our Lord's blessed miracles. That is why each one of them should be preached from, and thought upon. It is so that what Christ did for those in need, would be carefully brought to light, so that we might be instructed by our Lord's example. We want to know how He ministered to people, so that we might learn how to minister to others in His name. We do not have the ability in ourselves to help a single soul without the grace and the blessing of God. But with knowledge of what Jesus was like, and what He did in His ministry, we can learn to be helpers of others around us. In this way, God will be praised and glorified. God uses the knowledge of Christ, and our compassionate observation of others, in our learning to minister for Him. We know that doctors and surgeons have received much good knowledge and practical teaching, so that they will be able to apply what they have learned so that they might effectively minister to those in great physical need. Even so, we as Christians can learn many good things from the Great Physician, our Lord Jesus Christ, as we study His healing ministry.

You and I may not have a license to practice medicine, but we do have a command to preach the gospel to every creature. We do have the command given to us from the Lord Jesus Himself, that we would “let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.” So this morning I would like to set before you 4 ways that you, as a Christian, can help forward the saving, healing ministry of Jesus to needy people around you. The 1st way is by bringing needy people around you, to Jesus. The 2nd way is by showing them the sympathy of the Lord Jesus. The 3rd way is by believing in Jesus' power to instantaneously change a heart or a life. And the 4th is to proclaim that He does all things well.

The 1st way that you can help forward the saving, healing ministry of Jesus to needy people around you is to bring them to Him. (Verses 31 and 32)

“Again departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee.” “Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him.” This is the essence of Christian ministry; bringing people to Jesus. These people in this region knew of the power of Jesus to heal, and so they brought Him this difficult case of this deaf man, who also could not speak clearly or distinctly. They knew that this man could not help himself or change his condition, but they believed that Jesus could, and so they brought him to Him. They believed that if Jesus would simply put his hand on this man; that if Jesus was willing, that He certainly was able to heal this man of his great disability. This is the kind of faith that Jesus responds to; the faith that brings the needs of others to His attention. This kind of faith knows how to beg on behalf of others. To bring people to Jesus is to be praying for people around you; for their highest welfare and their eternal good. This is one of the ways that we bring people to Jesus today. We cannot bring them to Him physically, but we can bring them to Him spiritually, for He is very much alive; having been raised from the dead, He is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Let us learn to bring people to Jesus in prayer, if we haven't done it much before.

It is always good in the sight of God that people are presented with Jesus' ability to make them whole, complete, and eternally happy. And people who have this kind of faith in our day should not feel that they are limited to their asking and begging only for the physical needs of people. They are also concerned with the spiritual welfare of people around them just as much, if not more so, than for their physically being made whole and well. We know, if we read our

Bibles, that there are people all around us who cannot hear spiritually. The Lord Jesus would often say, in the days of His earthly ministry – “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Matthew 11: 15, Mark 7: 16, Luke 8: 8) There are people all around us every day, who are deaf to spiritual truth; they are deaf to all the expectations that God has of them as people. Most people can physically hear the gospel, but there are many who are spiritually unable to hear the truth of God’s word and receive it, because there is something blocking it in their mind and heart. That impediment is, that they are spiritually deaf to the voice of both the law and the gospel. We need to understand that there is a spiritual inability to hear in all people by nature.

Listen to what the Lord Jesus says of the Pharisees who were trying to disqualify His ministry and to bring Him into dishonor and disgrace in the eyes of the people. He was preaching to people who were spiritually deaf in John 8: 42. He says there: “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.” “Why do you not understand My speech?” “Because you are not able to listen to My word.” (“Not able to hear His word,” it says in the KJV) And in John 8: 46, He says again, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” “And if I tell you the truth, why do you not believe Me?” “He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.” They had this great spiritual infirmity; this impediment of spiritual deafness, but they would not admit it. This is how people are without the grace of God at work in their hearts and lives. When people are deaf spiritually, they do not understand that they will most certainly face God at the Judgment Day and their life will be evaluated. They have not really heard that this life is the only time of preparation for such a Day and such a meeting. And they do not know that they will not be prepared to meet Him, and to have Him do this evaluation of their life. This is because they have never really been touched by Christ who can bring to them the reality of a work of grace in their hearts; that He can take away this impediment that blocks their mind and heart from hearing.

Let us understand that it is only Christ who can give a person ears to hear the warnings and threatenings of the Law. It is only Christ who can open their ears to hear His sweet words in the gospel, promising them grace which will save their souls. You and I must learn to pray for them that this spiritual impediment would be removed. These Pharisees did not want to admit their deafness, but this deaf and mute man was brought to Jesus so that He could heal him. Let us remember that there are people who are being drawn by the Father to Christ. There are people who will be made willing by the Lord’s power to come and sit under the Word, and thus be brought close to Jesus. We must be on the look out to think about who we could bring, and invite them to come with us. In most cases we realize that people around us have physical ears that can hear, and so there isn’t any reason why we can’t bring them to Jesus by bringing them to the place where He manifests His saving power. When people are coming to church they are at least outwardly hearing the words of eternal life. The impediment might not yet be removed, but it is at church, in the preaching of the word, where Christ manifests Himself to His people and to sinners who have never heard with ears of faith. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word concerning Christ,” it says in Roman 10: 17. “How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” “And how shall they hear without a preacher?” So to inwardly come to hear, people who are presently spiritually deaf must be brought to the place where they can outwardly hear the truth of God’s word. To inwardly hear, they must have the ability to hear given to them by Christ. And then they shall be saved from their sins, come to know God, and praise Him for His wonderful works.

The 2nd way that you can help forward the saving, healing ministry of Jesus to needy people around you is by showing them the humility and the sympathy of the Lord Jesus. (verses 33 and 34a)

“And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue.” “Then looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, ‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’” It was Christ’s humility to take this man aside from the multitude. It was not as though He did not have the ability to do this miracle before all the people, as He had done many times. It was rather, that in this instance, He did not want to do this miracle from the wrong motive, which would be to do it for the applause of men; to do it just to show that He could do it. This would not be bringing glory to God, but rather simply impressing men with His power. Both He and His Father had higher goals. It was that the message of the gospel would be attested by the power of this miracle and that some would then come to saving faith in Christ because of it. This is how you and I, also, are to go about doing our good works. It is not so that we might be seen of men so that they might be impressed with us. It is so that they would believe in God, praise God, and come to be His servants forever. Christ’s kingdom, cause, and glory are not advanced by fleshly displays of power. It is “not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord,” that the temple of the Lord is built, and glory comes to God. We are not to so let our light shine that people see our good works and praise us here upon the earth. We let our light shine in such a way that people see our good works, but they then glorify; they praise, the Father in heaven. It is by true humility that Christ’s kingdom advances and people are truly helped. The Father who sees in secret will reward us openly.

Sometimes the greatest miracles are better done by the Lord’s “taking a person aside”. I suppose it would please all of us to know most definitely of the Lord’s work prospering among us, so that we could see it going on before our eyes. But the Lord knows that it is no doubt often better for a person to be healed, or for faith to be conceived, not before the prying eyes of many people, but when He and they are alone, or only with a few people. Jesus often did this in some of His greatest miracles. In the raising of Jairus’ daughter from the dead in Luke 8: 51, He put them all outside. He just took James, and Peter and John, and the parents with Him into the room where she lay. He knew that this would glorify God more than a great display of His power in front of the many mourners there that day. In John 5: 44, Jesus says, “How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?” Let us be those who seek the honor that comes from God so that others will believe. Adam Clarke says in his commentary: “When Christ saves a sinner, he separates him from all his old evil companions, and from the spirit and maxims of an ungodly world.”

Jesus was also very personally sympathetic to this man who had these problems of deafness and inability to speak. Before He performed the miracle He put His fingers in this man’s ears, and He spat and touched the man’s tongue. “Then looking up to heaven,” it says: “He sighed...” Jesus was very personally sympathetic with this man’s condition. He was telling him in a personal way, with a form of sign language, what He was going to do for him. He was saying by His actions: “These ears are going to be unplugged so that you can hear.” “This tongue which has had so much trouble with stuttering and stumbling over itself, I will set it free to speak.” I believe that Jesus’ sighing was his identification with all the years that this man had to endure this disability. He could understand how difficult it had been for him; how awkward, and frustrating, and even anguishing. The Lord Jesus knew every physical weakness this man had, and He knew what it meant for him to have to endure the maddening frustration of not being able to hear, and not being able to speak. He was showing this man that He sympathized with him, and that He was going to do what He alone could do in that situation. He would heal Him.

We should learn from this that the Lord Jesus is a Savior who is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities”, both physical and spiritual. This is why He was so able a minister to all of the people who came to Him with their sins and their problems. This also is why we can come to Him today, and why we can encourage others to come to Him now. “He is able to save to the uttermost, those who come to God through Him, since He always live to make intercession for

them.” (Hebrews 7: 25) Part of His holy work in intercession is being able to sympathize with those who come to Him with their problems. His sympathy and His intercession are motivated by His great willingness to show compassion to every needy sinner. And He is very willing to be your helper, dear believer, in and through His granting you salvation, and giving you help and assistance in all of your difficulties; both spiritual and physical, in this life. After you come to understand this, as a Christian, it ought to lead you to be able to show this same kind of sympathy to people around you who have physical and spiritual needs. How do you minister to them? You minister to them, first of all, by learning to sympathize with them, and by showing them that you care for them personally. You learn to sigh over their condition in your spirit. You then pray in your spirit, to God, and you ask Him to show you what you can do to help them to bear up under difficulties and trials. You will pray to Christ for wisdom, as to how you might be able to tell them where they can find grace and help in their time of need. We may not be able to personally heal them, but we can personally show interest in them; trying hard to understand what their experience has been, and what the difficulties are, which they are experiencing. Christ will teach you how to be a good listener to others in need, so that you might show them something of Him in your words and actions toward them.

When you have learned how to be sympathetic, then you should also pray to be able to show them compassion; that kind of godly compassion that asks yourself and the Lord, “What can I do for this person?” “What should I do for this person?” You can be sure that Christ will answer such questions that you will ask Him in prayer. In asking questions of your Lord like this, He will bring to your mind something that you can do for them. This is what good works are all about. It is a good work to give needy sinners the gospel. It is a good work, to as Paul says in Acts 20: 35, “labor with your hands, so that you might support the weak.” “And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

The 3rd way that you can help forward the saving, healing ministry of Jesus is by believing in Jesus’ power to instantaneously change a heart or a life.

(Verses 34 and 35)

“Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, ‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’” “Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly.” Let us take notice of the fact that this man’s whole life was changed immediately and instantaneously. We are living in a day when many people, when they think of seeing help come to other people, only see it in terms of a process of people doing things for other people. They do not speak about God being in the picture at all. They tend to want to downplay the idea of miracles happening, and God intervening miraculously and instantaneously, to save people’s souls, or to heal their bodies. Thomas Jefferson was like this. He published his own New Testament, having removed all the miracles from it. It made much more sense to him that way. But if you have come to know the Lord, Christ Himself has entered your heart, and the Holy Spirit through your words and actions can convince the people that you minister to, of their sins and their need of a Savior. Christ can reveal Himself to them by His powerful grace and presence.

Disbelief, or unbelief concerning the reality of Christ’s being able to change a bodily condition, or a sinful heart, in an immediate sense, will not glorify God, if you are trying to minister to others around you. God most certainly can, and He does at His own good pleasure, heal the bodies and save the sin-sick souls of people in our day, and in our generation. He changes the whole course of their lives by giving them the gift of regeneration. He takes away their sins and He imputes Christ’s righteousness to them in the act of justification. He did this miracle in your heart so that you might come to believe in Christ and be saved. Will you not remember, if you have been converted to Christ, that His entering your heart to regenerate it, took place in a moment of time? It was instantaneous. You may not have been able to pin-point

the exact time of it, when it took place for you, but you ought to be able to remember the general time period when it happened. You experienced the New Birth spiritually in a moment of time, and it was a miracle of Christ's doing just as surely as this man's receiving the ability to hear and to speak. So you were called by mighty and effectual grace, and you believed, and you were saved.

If you have believed in Jesus, the beginning of your faith was an instantaneous conception and birth performed by the Holy Spirit. When Christ came into your heart and life He had many ways of showing you that He had given you birth. He was right there in your heart, teaching you and leading you, and He made you know that He was there. His power and His presence convinced you that His word was true, and you began to read it, and live by it, and you followed Him in this way that He proscribed. It was He Himself who opened your ears to hear and to listen as a disciple and to be able to speak to Him in praise. It was He who did the miracle so that praise might be formed upon your lips. He did this miracle so that you could then come to speak clearly about your experience. Christ's power to save is very great, and we need very much to believe it. Christ can certainly do His work so that you can speak plainly of it. When He does a miracle in your heart to change your heart, raising you from the dead, and giving you ears to hear what His Spirit is saying to you through His word, then you should also want to speak to others about what has happened to you, so that God will be glorified, and Christ's kingdom will be of grace and glory would be furthered. Let your lips speak of the miracle that He did for you. **And then 4th - There is another thing that you can do to forward Christ's saving, healing ministry to needy people; and that is that you tell them that He does all things well.** (Verses 36 and 37)

It says that when He had healed them, "He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it." "And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, 'He has done all things well.'" "He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak." Now what are we to think of this man's disobedience to Christ's express command that he should tell no one? Was it holy or unholy disobedience? Can any disobedience of Christ's command be holy? I like what John Gill says in his commentary on this. He says, "The man that had his hearing and speech restored to him, and those that brought him, and as many as were witnesses of the miracle: that they should tell no one; of the cure that was wrought, being not desirous of the applause of men; and knowing it would bring upon Him the envy of the Scribes and Pharisees; and be a means of putting the common people upon setting Him up as a temporal king, such as they expected the Messiah would: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; or spoke of Him, as the Ethiopic version reads it; for they looked upon his charge merely to proceed from modesty, and that made them the more forward to speak of his greatness and in his praise, to publish His mighty works, and spread the fame of his miracles far and near." "So such who have received the grace of God, are become acquainted with Christ, and have a real experience of divine things, cannot but speak of them; they are like new wine which hath no vent; and are ready to burst like new bottles; to forbear speaking is a pain, and weariness to them; nay, they think, should they hold their peace, the stones in walls would cry out." "Wherefore, partly for the glory of God, the magnifying of the riches of His grace, and the honor of Christ, and the blessed Spirit; and partly to show their own sense of things, the gratitude of their minds, and the thankfulness of their hearts, as well as for the use, comfort, edification, and instruction of others, they must speak, and cannot be silent, whatever restraints are laid upon them." (end of quote)

I think that this is wonderfully said. When you think of all that your Lord has done for you, in His going to the cross for you, and His dying there for your sins; when you think of all that He continues to do for you, each and every day by His grace, transforming you into His own blessed image, giving you ears to hear Him, and a heart to follow Him as His disciple, then how can you

possibly remain silent? This man, and the people who brought him to Jesus had a command not to tell what He had done for them, but you and I have a command to tell. Will we all be disobedient, and Jesus receive no praise? Will He receive no honor, for all the good things that He has done? I trust that you will not be silent, but instead that you would pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit to declare the great things that He has done for you.