

20151206 Mark 7:24-37 What is True Belief

Pastor Michael Engle, Clearcreek Chapel

Introduction

Let me jog your memory about where we were last week in the book of Mark. Pastor Steve preached on the first twenty-four verses of Mark chapter seven. There we were shown, by God, what “true defilement” really is. You see, true defilement comes from within a man, not from without. God is not so concerned with what you put in your mouth as he is what comes out of it. For “out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks”. The Pharisees didn’t understand this and in their self-guided dash for righteousness they proceeded to write up a bunch of rules they thought they could follow and upon following them condemn others for not following them! Jesus, far from congratulating them, calls them hypocrites and quotes to them an Old Testament passage that would have stung like a cat of nine tails. We, today, laugh at this and say to ourselves, “God, I thank you that I am not like other people—[Pharisees], [homosexuals], [Muslims]—or even like this [Democrat]. I [go to Church] twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.” And we miss the point. We often resemble true defilement as believers because we have, long ago, forgotten what true belief looks like and what it does. I, often forget, what true belief looks and sounds like. I need, we need, the mirror of God’s word held up in our face for us to see what God says we should look and act like as true believers.

This week in the book of Mark we will see exactly that. You’ve gotta love the way God tells his story when we move from the Pharisees (our warning) in the beginning of the chapter to the worst of pagans (our example) at the end. Yes, we are headed with Jesus to a land filled with pagans of the worst kind to see what true belief looks like. Isn’t it just like God to do it this way. The Gospel is heading out to the most unlikely place where people will believe and bow, hear and speak, just like the Jews back home. It’s coming to the gentiles. It’s coming to us!

Look down at your Bibles to verse twenty-four. This is what God’s word says.

Belief Comes to the Table in Humility (vs 24-30)

24 And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden.

As I indicated earlier Jesus is headed far from the traditional land of the Jews. He has headed out to the northwest, a land traditionally associated with hatred for the Jews and their beliefs. Jesus is breaking the mold here and you and I can be grateful for it. He has headed out to a land beyond the children of Israel to a land filled with gentile dogs.

Perhaps he was thinking the farther away he got from his homeland the less these Pharisees would pursue him and he might get some needed rest. The end of verse twenty-four gives away what you probably already knew was bound to happen. No rest for Jesus, even in the pagan land of gentile dogs.

God's word says this, as we continue, in verse twenty-five,

25 But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

So much for rest. Hope cannot be hidden. Immediately, as Mark is so fond of saying, a woman with a demon possessed daughter falls at his feet. This isn't a big surprise to us at this point. We have seen Jesus cast out demons and raise the dead so it's not unexpected that a woman with a possessed child would come to him, but I want you to pay attention to her physical position. She didn't come and stand over him, she didn't bow, she didn't kneel, she "fell down at his feet". She knows her place before for the servant Lord.

You might be saying to yourself, well, that's not all that surprising either in light of the rest of Mark. We saw in chapter three where "whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him¹". And in chapter five we see the demon possessed man who "ran and fell down

¹ Mark 3:11

before him²”, Jairus who upon seeing Jesus, “...fell at his feet³”, and the woman with a discharge of blood who “fell down before him⁴”. You might even be thinking this is the normal thing for people to do and I would agree, but, and it’s big but, we are not in Kansas anymore. We are in Tyre and look what this lady was, she “**was a Gentile, a Syrophenician**”! This is huge! The Lord Jesus has gone away to rest and be left alone and who has sought him out but the most unlikely person of all, a Syrophenician. She, the enemy, had come and fallen down at his feet. What will he do? It’s likely the stories of Jesus’ acts have come to this land long before he arrived and she knows what he can do, so she comes to him, humbly falls at his feet and begs for the well-being of her little daughter. Can you feel the tension? Do you hurt for this woman who is powerless over the demon who’s taken up residents in her little girl? What kind of desperation must it have taken to bust in on this powerful enemy of your people without regard for you own safety and beg? Just beg.

What will Jesus do? Surely he will act as he has before and remove this child of hell from this child of Tyre. Won’t he?

God’s word says this in verse twenty-seven,

27 And he said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

If you read your Bible with any sort of thought at all Jesus says some things that make your mind to backflips. There are times where you think, “I know what’s next” and then BLAM! He says something like this. What do you think she’s thinking now? She has barged in on the Servant King, fell at his feet and seemingly been kicked in the face for her efforts. What will she do? Will she say anything or just get up and walk out - humiliated and without hope for her little girl?

Let’s see. She answers in verse twenty-eight. God’s word says this,

² Mark 5:6

³ Mark 5:22

⁴ Mark 5:33

28 But she answered him, “Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

I don’t know if this woman understands that the Gospel came “to the Jew first and also to the Greek⁵”, but she most definitely understands her position before the creator of the universe in front of whom she has fallen and from whom she has begged. And her words should be a lesson to all of us. We have nothing to offer God but are as dogs searching for crumbs dropped by the Kings children underneath the table. Our problem is that too often we believe our mangle filled coat, all full of flees and grime, is the royal robe of a king. Oh how deadly is our mistaken identity. Our poor woman has no such visions of grandeur. She knows well her place and seeks any nourishment from the King there is to be had. Even crumbs off the dirty floor beneath his children’s feet.

We see Jesus’ response to her in verse twenty-nine. God’s word says this,

And he said to her, “For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.” And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

These simple two lines cannot possibly cover all that has just taken place. The bareness of them should be shattering to you as a reader. Jesus, knowing in whom this woman would believe, has setup a heart wrenching scene to show the beauty of belief through the response of the woman. Not only may she rise up and be on her way, free from the bonds of sin, but her daughter has been set free from Hell as well. She has moved from enemy to friend, from eating the children’s crumbs off the floor to being his adopted daughter, forever “recline[ing] at table in the kingdom of God⁶”. True belief does not saunter in and demand a hearing with the King, it falls at his feet, realizing it brings nothing to the negotiating table and begs for whatever scraps the King may give. Is this you Church? Have you forgotten all that you have been given and forgiven at your salvation? Do you fall at his feet and long to be with Jesus or do you fight and scratch for the next chicken bone of want that falls on the floor?

⁵ Romans 1:16

⁶ Luke 13:29

True belief comes in humility and falls at the feet of the king.

Move on with me to verse thirty-one. God's word says this,

[Belief Hears and Speaks \(vs 31-37\)](#)

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him.

We have traveled many miles with Jesus to get to our current location here in Sidon, but the people haven't changed much. These are still gentiles like most of you and I. Still we see that many have heard of and are coming to Jesus to be healed. This time it is a man who is deaf and cannot speak. Again we see someone, or in this case many someone's begging Jesus to lay his hand on the deaf and mute man. You wonder if this man even knew what was happening to him. Had they devised a way of communicating with him? Could he read and therefore understand who Jesus was or did he just know. Like so many others we have seen, did he just know this was the only man who could make him well? Whatever the case may be, this man's friends seem to know who Jesus is and the beg for his healing touch.

We'll move on to verse thirty-three to see what happens. God's word says this,

33 And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. 34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."

Are you bothered by what is happening? As someone with a pretty wide personal space I am immediately uncomfortable with the scene. Jesus has taken this man aside to someplace private and put his fingers in his ears. They are CLOSE. Very close. They should be enemies, but Jesus has no reservations about his own personal space and shows this man, who is likely not in this position very often, affection of a familial kind. And that isn't even the half of it. He spits on his finger and touches the man's tongue. There is no getting closer to this man than Jesus is right now, but somehow the man stays and Jesus makes the request to Heaven, "be opened". Surely this man is confused. Perhaps he is scared, but there is no way he has ever been in a

position like this before. Here he stands, intimate with his creator, fingers in ears and spit on tongue, waiting. What is this guy saying? I can't hear him. We don't have to wait long to know what happened.

God's word says this in verse thirty-five,

35 And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.

Now I know all things in Scripture are there for a reason and some not there for a reason but don't you want to know what he said. Suddenly his ears are opened and his tongue released. He and Jesus are standing there incredibly close to one another and he "spoke plainly". Perhaps after a lifetime of silence and limited communication he simply uttered, "thank you". Perhaps he asked for the name of his healer. I don't know, but we do know that he and his friends are extremely excited about what has happened.

Look down at verse thirty-six. God's word says this,

36 And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.

Now the floodgates have been opened, like a little child who has just learned to talk our formerly deaf/mute man and his friends do not know when to stop speaking. In fact, like any rebellious child they not only disobey a direct command to be silent, but mount up more and more words with every moment. They are not proclaiming the Gospel, but only the miracle. They don't yet know of the death, burial and resurrection of the Servant King. Shh, says the King, wait, it won't be long...

But do hear what they say at the end of our passage today. God's word says this in verse thirty-seven,

37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Praise God they've got that right. He has done all things well including bringing faith to the dogs and causing their ears to hear and their mouths speak!

True belief hears with ears that God has opened and speaks with a tongue unleashed by Heaven.

True belief comes to the gentiles through humility of heart and the opening of the ears by God himself. Through the Gospel being believed the gentiles can call out with Isaiah, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy."

Sing for Joy all you children of the King, you have been seated at His table!

Repent of your sin and believe on the Savior all you unbelieving gentiles! Jesus has the power to open your deaf ears and unleash your tongue that you to might sing for Joy! Bring your hungry, dead soul to the Kings table and be set free. Listen as he opens your ears to hear the very words of God and Sing Oh Sing of the Redeemer who has travelled long into this foreign land to bring salvation to us dogs who have nothing to offer but praise and thanksgiving to our sweet, sweet King.