

Mark 7:31-37
The Healing Christ

³¹ Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 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.” ³⁵ And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶ And Jesus^[a] charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷ And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

May God add his blessing to the reading and preaching of his Holy Word.

Let us pray together:

Holy Father, you have done great things in sending your Son to this earth to heal those who are physically and spiritually sick. Teach us today of Christ’s healing ministry, of his power over debilitating diseases, and his power to open ears deaf to the gospel, and his power to loosen sin-paralyzed tongues to confess and declare your praises. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

When Jesus Christ walked the dusty roads of ancient Palestine he was immersed in a world that was filled with serious problems. Rome ruled with an iron fist the countries surrounding and beyond the Mediterranean Sea. It promoted a religion of emperor worship. Besides emperor worship there were many pagan religions, like the worship of the goddess Artemis, headquartered in Ephesus. It was believed that the sacred stone of her worship miraculously fell from the sky.

And then the Hebrew religion itself had sunk into a religion of legalism – there was the requirement to obey hundreds of man-made rules in a futile attempt to gain righteousness before the holy God. There was an outward show of religion but an absence of true and sincere faith and love toward Yahweh God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the God who revealed himself to the Hebrew people.

Besides the problem of these false religious beliefs and practices, diseases of various kinds ran rampant: there was leprosy, and blindness, and paralysis, and bleeding from bodily malfunctions. And then there was the great problem of demon harassment and possession –unclean spirits that would inhabit and seek to destroy people’s lives.

The world needed help – it needed the intervention of God himself – it needed a divine Savior, if there was any hope of help and healing. God was not ignorant of the desperate needs of humanity. ⁴ But ^(B)when the fullness of time had come, God sent

forth his Son, (C)born (D)of woman, born (E)under the law, ⁵(E)to redeem those who were under the law, (Gal. 4:4-5). And so we read...

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,

If you remember from last week, Jesus had gone north from his home base of Capernaum on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and traveled some 40 miles NW to the region of Tyre and Sidon and there he had met the Syrophenician woman whose little daughter was infected with an unclean demon spirit. Jesus at first seemed to refuse to help her but she would not take “no” for an answer and said that “even the dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall under the table” – she rewarded her faith and healed her daughter. She was a Gentile, not a Jew – and we saw that she was an example of the first fruits of the great Gentile harvest of saving faith that would come in due time as the Gospel would go out to the Gentile world through the preaching of the apostles and the other Christian people.

Now Jesus comes to the region known as the Decapolis – it was an area east of the Sea of Galilee that consisted of 10 cities that were mostly Greek cities and therefore a primary Gentile, not a Jewish area. So Jesus goes from one Gentile territory in the north to another Gentile territory in the East. Why did he do this? There’s one thing we do know about Jesus’ travels:

I. *Jesus’ travels were not random but always with a purpose.*

So here he comes and meets another individual. We don’t know whether he was a Jew or Gentile – we are not told – but we do know he was seriously handicapped – he was deaf – he could not hear – and he was dumb to some degree – he had a speech impediment. People who cannot hear often have such an impediment.

We know another thing about this man – he had some friends who were greatly concerned for his well-being. He did not come on his own, but his friends brought him. They must have loved this man, for the text says in verse 32 that they “begged” Jesus to heal him. Just like the Syrophenician woman had “begged” Jesus to heal her daughter.

A. What we see in both these cases is *Desperate people come to a Delivering (compassionate) Savior.*

We have desperate people today – in great need for themselves or for others. But this Delivering Savior is as alive and well today as he was back then. What are your desperate needs today? Bring them to the Delivering Savior and beg him for his mercy. His ear is open to the cry of his people. His compassion is no less today than it was back then. His power has been reduced for the years. His power to heal and deliver is inestimably strong and powerful. Jesus is our great High Priest before the throng of God who “ever

lives to make intercession for his people.” Come with your desperate needs and lay them at the Delivering Savior’s feet.

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. ³³

This word, ‘speech impediment,’ is found only here in the Greek NT and only in the LXX in Isa. 35:6 – showing with almost doubtless certainty that Mark had this Isaiah passage in mind – as being fulfilled here.

Isa. 35:3-6 - (G)Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴ Say to those who have an anxious heart,
“Be strong; fear not!

(H)Behold, your God
will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.
He will come and save you.”

⁵ (I)Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

⁶ (J)then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

II. :32 – *Jesus’ healing ministry was a fulfillment of Messianic Prophecy*

A. Jesus’ healing power was known (see Mk 5)

and they begged him to lay his hand on him.

Mk. 5:23 - ²³ and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and (A)lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.”

Mk. 6:5 - ⁵ And (A)he could do no mighty work there, except that (B)he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.

Mk. 16:18 - they will lay their hands (C)on the sick , and they will recover.”

Lu. 4:40 - ⁴⁰ Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and (A)he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.

Acts 28:8 - ⁸ It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and (A)prayed, and (B)putting his hands on him, healed him.

1 Tim. 4:14 - ¹⁴ (A)Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you (B)by prophecy when the council of elders (C)laid their hands on you

2 Tim. 1:6 - ⁶ For this reason I remind you ^(A)to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,

³³ And taking him aside from the crowd privately,

cf. Mk. 8:23 - ²³ And ^(A)he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when ^(B)he had ^(C)spit on his eyes and ^(D)laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?”

he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue.

III. :33 – Jesus’ healing methods were varied

AP – he treats each individual uniquely

:33 – Jesus often worked healing through accompanying physical means

Laying on of hands

Finger in ear

Spit on tongue

(ex of oil for healing; laying on of hands by the elders and church)

Hearing needed first to hear any instructions Jesus might give him subsequently.

Henriksen: Jesus treats each person uniquely according to their need.

Luke 9:5-7 - As long as I am in the world, ^(H)I am the light of the world.” ⁶ Having said these things, ^(I)he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. ^(J)Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷ and said to him, “Go, wash in ^(K)the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and ^(L)came back seeing.

³⁴ And looking up to heaven, he sighed...

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IV. Whatever method Jesus used, he was dependent on his heavenly Father to bring the healing

AP - are you dependent on the heavenly Father for his help and guidance for the problems and challenges that come up in your life?

and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” ³⁵ And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.

34-35 Jesus’ healing command is always implemented without fail

Ears and tongue healed – proof – he spoke plainly

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

:36 – people’s obedience to Jesus often fails although his commands to be healed do not.

AP – Are you obeying Christ’s commands in your life?

37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well.

37 – *The immediate and complete healing of this man rightly evoked the unqualified amazement and praise of the people.*

AP – Do the miracles of Christ amaze you and evoke praise within your breast? Or are you dull in recognizing them and recognizing him who does them?

Jesus does all things well. He’s doing it in your life for his glory and your good.

Cranfield: Perhaps recalling Gen. 1:31 - ^{31 (A)}And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

A reason why all he did was good: John 5:17 - ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”

He has done all things well...

Mk. 1:11 - ¹¹ And ^(D)a voice came from heaven, ^(E)“You are my beloved Son;^[a] with you I am well pleased.”

John 8:29 -

I always do the things that are pleasing to him.

He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

Related texts:

Matt 15:29-31 - ^{29 (A)}Jesus went on from there and walked ^(B)beside the Sea of Galilee. And he ^(C)went up on the mountain and sat down there. ³⁰ And great crowds came to him, bringing with them ^(D)the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, ^{31 (E)}so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, ^(E)the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And ^(G)they glorified ^(H)the God of Israel.

Spiritual hearing:

Matt. 7:24 - "Everyone then who **hears** these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Matt. 11:15 - He who has ears to **hear**, let him **hear**.

Matt. 13:8-9 - ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some ^(A) a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.⁹ ^(B) He who has ears, ^[a] let him hear." I.e., "Let him hear with understanding."

John 10:27 -

²⁷ ^(B) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ ^(C) I give them eternal life, and ^(D) they will never perish, and ^(E) no one will snatch them out of my hand.

Spiritual speaking:

Matt. 16:16-17- ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, ^(W) "You are ^(X) the Christ, ^(Y) the Son of ^(Z) the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, ^(AA) "Blessed are you, ^(AB) Simon Bar-Jonah! For ^(AC) flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, ^(AD) but my Father who is in heaven.

Rom. 10:9-10 - ⁹ because, if ^(A) you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and ^(B) believe in your heart ^(C) that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

1 Tim. 3:15-16 - ¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

^(A) He ^[a] was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated ^[b] by the Spirit, ^[c]
^(B) seen by angels,
^(C) proclaimed among the nations,
^(D) believed on in the world,
^(E) taken up in glory.

Phil 2:11 - ¹¹ and ^(A) every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is ^(B) Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

APPLICATIONS:

Cranfield. Likely that "...Mark saw in these miracles a reminder for the contemporary Church that all true faith and all true confession of Christ is a miracle.

“We may well see in the order here (first ears, then tongue) a reminder that it is only as the Church hears the Word of God that it has anything worthwhile to say.” (P. 254-255 – The Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary – The Gospel According to St. Mark by C.E.B. Cranfield)

Review the Structure/Main points

:31 – Jesus goes from one Gentile region to another

Jesus’ travels are not random but always with a purpose.

AP – his directions of your life and its event is not random – but God’s greater purpose is behind it all.

:32 – ***Jesus’ healing ministry was a fulfillment of Messianic Prophecy***

A. Jesus’ healing power was known (see Mk 5)

B. Desperate people come to a Delivering (compassionate) Savior

See Syrophenician woman

:33 – ***Jesus’ healing methods were varied***

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Closing Prayer

-Sermon by Jeff Gregory, pastor
Good Shepherd Community Church
Dallas, TX U.S.A.
Sept. 25, 2022

www.gscddallas.org

