

Sermon Notes

Mark 7:31-37

31 Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. 32 There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

33 After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. 34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "*Ephphatha!*" (which means "Be opened!"). 35 At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

36 Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. 37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Introduction

In the earlier part of this chapter Jesus had disputed with some Scribes and Pharisees about ritual and tradition.

And had taught those who would hear that defilement does not come from without, but from within.

It is also true to say that Faith comes from within.

On one hand we saw the faith of a non-Jewish woman in Mark 7:24-30.

And now on the other hand we shall see the faith of Jesus Himself.

In both instances Faith arises in the heart and comes forth out of the mouth such as stated in romans 10:9-10 that "if you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that God has raised Jesus from the dead you shall be saved".

In today's text we shall see

Jesus heading towards the Sea of Galilee.

Then He will encounter the friends of a deaf man who had such an impediment in his speech that it sounded like his tongue was tied up in knots.

They will bring him to Jesus, begging that Jesus to put His hand on him.

Just as it is good to pray for our children when they are not with us, it is also good to bring the needy to Jesus for prayer.

Jesus will take him aside and put His fingers in the ears of the man, spit and touch his tongue.

Again, a spiritual battle is going on, within the man himself.

Jesus will sigh and speak in His own tongue what was in His heart, "Be open".

Jesus will speak from the Faith within His own heart.

This is demonstrated in the book of Hebrews, where the author places an Old Testament saying in the mouth of Jesus; "I will put My trust in Him".

So when Jesus sighed and spoke that word, it was an act of faith and so Jesus is the forerunner of our faith.

The effect upon the man was immediate.

His's ears were opened, his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly.

Notice the order;

When a person's ears are opened to hear the word of God, then their tongue is loosed to give Him praise.

1. So let's take a Closer Look at this Story.

A. This particular incident is Recorded for us only in the Gospel of Mark.

1) You won't find it in Matthew, Luke or John, so without Mark, we wouldn't know about Jesus' encounter with this deaf and mute man.

B. As with All Portions of Scripture, God had Mark record this Incident for a Reason, so let's take a look at it carefully.

- 1) Imagine that you are the deaf man in this passage.
- 2) You are completely cut off from the world of sound.
- 3) You cannot hear the sound of your loved ones' voices; you cannot hear the laughter of children, the wind in the trees, water rushing, birds calling, music or singing.
- 4) That would be a difficult adjustment for any of us to make.

C. Deafness can be an Isolating Experience.

- 1) It is one thing to lose your sense of smell or taste, but to lose your hearing presents many challenges in life.
- 2) Today there are so many more opportunities and resources for people who are deaf, but those who were deaf in Jesus' day did not have any of those advantages.
- 3) They did not have schools or training or a fully developed sign language.
- 4) We need to remember that it was extremely difficult for handicap people in the time of the New Testament.

2. The Problem (verses 31-32)

31 Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. 32 There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

A. We have looked at some of Jesus' other healing miracles, but this incident presents some unique aspects for us to explore.

- 1) It begins when Jesus leaves the area of Tyre and makes his way back to the Sea of Galilee.
- 2) Tyre was about 35 miles northwest of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus usually ministered.
- 3) Once again, we don't know why Jesus made this particular trip.
- 4) But it was unusual for Jesus to leave Israel and to spend some time in a foreign country.
- 5) This was actually the farthest north that Jesus traveled.

B. After casting a demon out of a young girl in Phoenicia, Jesus made his way into the region of the Decapolis.

- 1) "Deca" is the Greek word for "ten," and "polis" is the Greek word for "city," so the word literally means "ten cities," and that's exactly what it was.
- 2) The Decapolis was a group of ten cities located on the east side of the Sea of Galilee.
- 3) These were mostly inhabited by Gentiles and under Gentile rule.
- 4) So Jesus is still on "break" so to speak, and has not yet returned to his preaching mission to his own people in Israel. However, even though
- 5) And while Jesus was not teaching and preaching publicly in the Decapolis, people there still knew about him.

6) Remember when Jesus healed the demon-possessed man in Mark chapter five, he went back to the Decapolis and told how much Jesus had done for him.

7) So, here we have Jesus arriving in the Decapolis where people have already heard about his miraculous powers, and while he is there, some people bring to him this deaf man.

C. The people now bring to Jesus this man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.

1) This man was both deaf and partially mute, which means he was cut off from communication on both ends.

2) He could not hear, and so people would have difficulty communicating with him.

3) And he could hardly talk, which means he would have a hard time communicating back.

4) So this man would have been extremely isolated and lonely.

5) He probably would not have known that Jesus was in town or even who Jesus was,

6) He was basically cut off from the world.

7) But fortunately for him, had some friends who heard that Jesus was around and they brought him to Jesus to intercede on his behalf.

8) They believed in Jesus' ability to heal, and so they begged him to lay his hands on the man and heal him.

3. The healing (verses 33-35)

33 After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. 34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "*Ephphatha!*" (which means "Be opened!"). 35 At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

A. The healing that follows is very interesting.

1) Jesus didn't just say, "Okay, you can hear and speak again now,"

2) But there were several things that took place first.

B. First of all, Jesus took him aside.

1) It is interesting that Jesus takes the man away from the crowd before he heals him.

2) On the one hand, who wouldn't want this man to talk again.

3) Is it right to raise the people's hopes so high.

4) If God wanted to heal the man, couldn't Jesus have just prayed for him and healed him right then and there?

C. Granted, not all of Jesus' healings were private.

1) There were times during his public ministry when the crowds brought him their sick and he healed them all in front of everyone.

2) But when it comes to individual healings, we see a pattern of Jesus avoiding the crowds and taking the individual aside.

3) This was due to Jesus' concern for the dignity of the individual.

4) Jesus does not want to make a spectacle of anyone.

5) Part of it was Jesus' own humility.

6) Jesus was not looking for the admiration of the crowds.

7) And another part of it was also Jesus' mission.

8) Jesus came primarily to preach and to teach.

9) His miracles backed up his teaching, but he did not want the miracles to distract from his teaching.

10) And so Jesus takes the man aside, away from the crowds.

D. Secondly, Jesus used physical touch.

1) Look at the rest of verse 33.

2) It says the Jesus “put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched man’s tongue”.

E. Jesus often used physical touch in healing.

- 1) Usually he would just lay his hands on the person.
- 2) This was more for the people’s benefit than for him.
- 3) Jesus didn’t need to use touch when healing.
- 4) There were times when he just spoke the word and the person was healed.
- 5) But the laying on of hands was a personal touch.
- 6) It demonstrated Jesus’ compassion, it helped the person with their faith, and it identified Jesus as the channel through whom God was working to bring the healing.
- 7) In this case physical touch was extremely important because the deaf man could not hear Jesus speak to him.
- 8) And so to communicate what he was doing, Jesus first put his fingers into the man’s ears.
- 9) Then he spit, and touched the man’s tongue.
- 10) And so Jesus touched the two specific areas where this man needed healing;his ears for hearing, and his tongue for speaking.

F. And then Jesus looked up to heaven.

- 1) This was an act of prayer and a sign of His dependence on God.
- 2) Although Jesus was God and the Son of God, he chose to live his entire human life in dependence on God the Father.
- 3) Jesus spoke about this in John 5:19
“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”
- 4) Although Jesus had authority to heal on his own, he deferred to the Father in prayer.

G. Jesus sighed, and he spoke.

34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “*Ephphatha!*” (which means “Be opened!”).

- 1) This sigh was a deep sigh, more along the lines of a groan.
- 2) This is a revelation of God’s heart concerning all sickness and sorrow and suffering in the world.
- 3) God is not a God way off in the distance, far removed from the sufferings of man.
- 4) He is a God who cares for us and feels our pain. He is the God who shares our burden.
- 5) He is the God who took on human flesh himself in order to free us from sickness and suffering and sin.

H. Jesus gave this command to the man’s ears that were shut and could not hear.

- 1) He gave this command to the man’s tongue that was bound and could not speak clearly.
- 2) He spoke to the man’s condition and he spoke to the man’s need.
- 3) And verse 35 tells us that Jesus said “Be opened!”
- 4) At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

I. This was an amazing miracle.

- 1) Not only did Jesus heal the man’s deafness instantly, but Jesus also gave the man the ability to speak clearly.
- 2) His ears were opened; his tongue was loosened.
- 3) This man was healed instantly and completely at Jesus’ word.
- 4) Do you wonder what his first words were?

4. The response (verses 36-37)

36 Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. 37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

A. And what was the response to Jesus’ miracle?

- 1) Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone.
- 2) But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it.
- 3) People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

B. Jesus often told people after he healed them not to go around telling others.

- 1) This was mainly to keep the focus on his teaching ministry and also to avoid a premature confrontation with the leaders in Jerusalem.
- 2) But good news is hard to keep quiet, and the people just couldn’t keep it to themselves.
- 3) They were overwhelmed with amazement at Jesus’ power.
- 4) First, they say, “He has done everything well.”
 - That echoes the language of Genesis 1 which affirms God’s work in creation: “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31)
 - When God does something, he always does it well.
 - He never does sloppy or substandard work.
 - What he begins he finishes, and he always does it to perfection.
 - That’s good news for us, because if you are a believer,
 - God is in process of working on you.
 - And as we read in the book of Philippians 1:6, you can be confident of this: “that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”
 - God does everything well.
- 5) And then the people also said this: “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”
 - That echoes the language of Isaiah 35 which we says “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.”
 - These was that prophecy of the coming Messiah, and so in healing the deaf and the mute, Jesus was demonstrating that he was indeed the Messiah who had been sent into the world.
 - Jesus is the Messiah; he is the Christ who does all things well.

Conclusion

So how do we apply this message to ourselves today?

We need to go straight to our own relationship with God this morning.

Are we walking in a personal relationship with God?

Are we listening to him?

Are we talking with him?

Are we obeying him?

Or are we cut off from God, like this deaf and mute man who was cut off from the people around him?

At one point we were all cut off from God, separated from him by our sins.

And we were as helpless to change our condition as the deaf and mute man in our passage today.

But if you are a believer today, somehow God got through to you, just as Jesus got through to the deaf man.

You had a heart of stone and your ears were deaf to spiritual things, but Jesus spoke to your heart, “Be opened!” and your heart was opened to God.

It was a miracle!

You think healing the deaf man was an amazing miracle?

It's nothing compared to the miracle of salvation.

Perhaps you have been a believer for some time now, but you have slipped in your walk with God.
You are not talking with him like you used to.

You are not listening to him like you used to.

This morning Jesus says to you, "Be opened!"

Open your ears to the wonderful truth of God's word all over again.

Open your mouth! Confess your sin to God, and let your lips speak forth his praises.

Say aloud for the whole world to hear: "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God,
who died and rose again!"

Confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord.

Is God calling you to do something, perhaps to step out in faith or to trust him in new ways?

Then hear Christ say to you: "Be opened!"

Be open to God working in your life;

be open to God's Spirit working in you;

be open to God's will whatever that may be.

That's our word for today.

Be open to God.

Be open to Jesus. He is the Christ. He is the Messiah.

He has done all things well, and he will do all things well.

And when Christ is leading your life, no matter how rocky the path that you walk, the end is always
good.

And how do I know this?

It's because Jesus Christ is God Almighty and Jesus Christ is good.

"Be opened!" Be open to God and his amazing love for you.

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