

Mark 7:31 - 37

NAME THAT TUNE...

Hear Him, ye deaf; His praise, ye dumb,
Your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Savior come;
And leap, ye lame, for joy.
"O For A Thousand tongues" -

This is part two of Jesus' healing ministry in Gentile regions.

31 Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. 32 They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they implored Him to lay His hand on him. 33 Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue *with the saliva*; 34 and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He *said to him, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!" 35 And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he *began* speaking plainly. 36 And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. 37 They were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

The geography of this passage is odd. He is not traveling in any sort of direct route. It would be like going from LaFayette to Rome by way of Dalton. Jesus went north to Sidon before turning southeast to the region of the Decapolis ("10 cities"). All together this horseshoe-shaped journey would have constituted a 120-mile walk. It is an unusual course. It may have been taken to further avoid the Herodians and Pharisees who were after Him. It may also have been intended as an extension of His ministry to the Gentiles. More dogs are to receive crumbs from His table.

We don't know why Jesus traveled the way he did. There may be encounters that are not recorded in the Gospels, so we simply go with what is given to us

There are Two types of miracles

Last week we saw that Faith turns dogs into children
Today we see how Jesus turns sickness into health

Last week :v.24-30 Jesus has power over demons and affliction. By the mere word of his will, he brings deliverance. It is his ordinary power. He can cast out demons from a distance.
Today's passage shows Jesus doing an up close miracle of healing.

v. 31 they bring to him a man...

The man has friends who bring him to Jesus and THEY implore him to lay hands on the man.

Deaf and a speech impediment i.e. such difficulty in speaking that people could not discern the words he was saying.

EX: That is common / normal for those who are hearing impaired. I.e. In Seminary we hosted a little boy who was at a special school in Jackson MS deaf children. He was with us during the week and at home the weekends

v. 32 - They were begging Jesus to help - Just lay hands on him. Were they asking for him to be healed or just asking for a blessing?

We don't know, but they got a double healing - hearing and speech.

In v. 33 Jesus takes the man aside for another miracle - very tactile . not magic potion of spit, but his touch expresses compassion.

This was an unusual healing - fingers in the ears and saliva on his tongue.

I like what one author said:

Jesus takes the man aside. His attention is personal and compassionate.

Entering the man's world, our Lord uses "sign language."

The man could not hear Jesus and he was also incapable of verbal communication. So Jesus "spoke" to him in the language he could understand—sign-language. The fingers placed in his ears and then removed meant, "I am going to remove the blockage in your hearing." The spitting and the touching of the man's tongue meant, "I am going to remove the blockage in your mouth." The glance up to heaven meant, "It is God alone who is able to do this for you." Jesus wanted the man to understand that it was not magic but God's grace that healed him. (Ferguson, Mark, 116)

*** God normally works through His Word and certain means, even those that seem unimpressive.*

FYI – THE spittle would have been considered 'unclean' according to the purification laws of the Jews.

Jesus sighed or groaned inwardly – i.e. a passionate appeal to the Father to intervene.

Jesus said, "Be Opened" (in Aramaic) and the result was immediate – he could hear and he could speak clearly. (You might imagine that he had a lot to say).

v. 36 the response was so dramatic that Jesus told them to keep silent and not tell anyone. But they continued to proclaim what Jesus had done. It would not be wise to condone their disobedience, but we can certainly understand it.

**** APPLY :**

In Mark we get the refrain – 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.' He means that there is a kind of supernatural hearing or understanding that many people are incapable of. The truth does not register with them. They are spiritually deaf. The reality is that apart from God opening our ears to hear we are all like this man.

Hearing is a metaphor for understanding and so deafness is a metaphor or illustration of mental and spiritual stubbornness, both an incapacity and an unwillingness to understand what Jesus is saying and to respond to him in faith. The problem wasn't that Jesus wasn't clear or that his teaching was too complicated so that it confused those who heard it. The problem wasn't in what Jesus said or how he said it. The problem was that the people who heard him were spiritually deaf.

The gospel can be communicated simply and clearly in any language. It doesn't require an advanced degree, college degree or High School diploma to understand it:

You have done wrong; a great deal of wrong against a Holy God and against others The Bible calls it sin, and the penalty or consequence is death.

You need forgiveness. There is GOOD NEWS. God will forgive you but only if you believe in his Son who was sent into the world to die on the cross precisely to secure forgiveness for those who trust in him.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved and know the gift of eternal life.

It's straight forward. Any failure to grasp the simple reality of the Good News is on our end, not God's.

EX: neighbor in France – he was an intelligent man and the conversation was NOT built around fancy words and arguments. Yet, after several conversation over a period of weeks and him reading the Gospel of Luke, his conclusion about Jesus was, "He wasn't a very good communicator because he only had 12 committed followers at the time of his death.'

We need ears to hear!!

Apart from the life-giving grace of God, we are all hearing impaired. You can sit in church, youth group, or a bible study and be spiritually deaf if the Holy Spirit doesn't open your ears the way Jesus did with this man. And when the Spirit gives us new hearts and restores our souls, He will also put new words on our lips. Tongues that are in bondage to prideful boasting, mockery, poisonous speech, and even blasphemy are set free to proclaim the excellencies of God.

Rom 3 (Ps 14, 5, 140)

“There is none righteous, not even one;

11 There is none who understands,

There is none who seeks for God;

12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless;

There is none who does good,

There is not even one.”

13 “Their throat is an open grave,

With their tongues they keep deceiving,”

“The poison of asps is under their lips”;

14 “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness”;

1 Pet 2

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Why is this miracle of healing given the spotlight? Mark has already indicated that Jesus had been healing among crowds of people. But here we get the short narrative of this one man.

The answer is seen in v. 37 – the response of the people as THEY make the Messianic connection

v. 32, 37 Gr word = speech impediment Only use here and Matt 15;

They did not pull these comments from v.37 out of thin air.

37 They were utterly astonished, saying, “He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

This verse is connected to the one time that the word for ‘speech impediment’ is used in Greek OT Isa 35:6
<https://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/>

Note how the people began to quote Isaiah 35. At this moment at the healing of this man, they refer to the prophecy from hundreds of years ago. THESE PEOPLE KNEW THEIR SCRIPTURE and were able to connect the dots. The Pharisees, who were experts in the scripture didn’t, couldn’t, or wouldn’t see the dots to connect them.

The Isaiah Context

Isa 34: dire text of judgement, the land will be laid low,

1 Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples!

Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it.

2 For the Lord’s indignation is against all the nations,

And His wrath against all their armies;

He has utterly destroyed them,

He has given them over to slaughter.

3 So their slain will be thrown out,

And their corpses will give off their stench,

And the mountains will be drenched with their blood.

Isaiah goes on to say that God will take the land away from the prince, away from the ruler, and deliver it to the jackals, to the snakes, to the birds of the air? This is a rising crescendo that has gone on for several chapters about the destruction that God had planned for this part of the world.

Then chap 35, sets a new tone as the Word of God moves from desolation to glory...

4 Say to those with anxious heart, "Take courage, fear not.

Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance; The recompense of God will come,
But He will save you."

5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

6 Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the **tongue of the mute** will shout for joy.

For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah.

7 The scorched land will become a pool And the thirsty ground springs of water;
In the haunt of jackals, its resting place, Grass *becomes* reeds and rushes.

8 A highway will be there, a roadway, And it will be called the Highway of Holiness.

The unclean will not travel on it, But it *will* be for him who walks *that way*,

And fools will not wander *on it*.

9 No lion will be there, Nor will any vicious beast go up on it;

These will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk *there*,

10 And the ransomed of the Lord will return And come with joyful shouting to Zion,

With everlasting joy upon their heads.

They will find gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Isaiah gives a vision of the exile's return and the coming kingdom.

Jesus puts himself in the middle of this prophecy and the people recognize it.

Miracles are about his compassion but also about the new day that has come. The beginning of His kingdom. Jesus has opened up the New Day.

As we read the bible we should always ask, "What does this say about Jesus?", then "What does it mean for me?"

This Jesus is compassionate. He cares for His people, his sheep, for ME. He is bringing us to the fullness of the New Day.

This narrative is a reminder to all of us who are believers that Jesus has done all things well.

We have been given a great salvation and a great privilege to proclaim Christ to all just as this Gentile man did.

I heard about an interview with Robert De Niro, and at the end of the interview, the host asked Robert De Niro, "At the end of your days, if you come before God, what will you say to Him when you meet Him?" And De Niro in a kind of cocky manner said, "What I'm going to say to God is, 'You have some explaining to do.'" No, no, Mr. De Niro, you are going to be the one doing the explaining.

God doesn't have to explain anything because He who created all things declared them good. And when we messed it all up, He sent His son to saved rebellious people.

God is in the heavens and does what He please, and He hath done all things well.

EX: Jim Boice, former pastor of Tenth Pres in Philly, received the diagnosis of terminal cancer. The time from the diagnosis to the time of his death was six weeks. Everybody in the church was wringing their hands, weeping, complaining, and offering him all kinds of patented remedies that would cure him.

He simply said: "Be at peace about this. God does all things well."

Do you believe it?

The TABLE is a reminder of how Jesus has done all things well for our salvation.

These are the simple normal means – bread and wine- that God uses to feed us spiritually.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The man got more than his friends may have been asking for. Have you ever experienced that?
When were your deaf ears opened to the things of Christ? How did that happen?
What were the most evident immediate changes in your life – thoughts, words, deeds?
What is it about Jesus that would lead you to say, “He has done all things well”?

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