

Miracle Ear

(Mark 7:31-37)

(preached 2/22/15 Pine Grove BC; Sunday AM)

Introduction

The town of Whitmire only had a few places to get something to eat when I was a little boy.

We had a Truck Stop.

We had a place called the Dairi-O that was a small grill with a just a few seats.

But the most popular place was The Café on main street.

They cooked a variety of items, and it was where the coffee drinkers hung out each morning before work.

In the early 1980s, it was owned and operated by the Derrick family.

Bill Derrick owned it and his entire family worked in it.

His wife cooked and served and his teenage daughter also worked there.

Her name was Shelia, and she was deaf and mute.

My grandparents went there every morning for breakfast, and I would tag along.

They would sit and drink coffee and talk about people who had died.

Well, I always wanted to leave before 9 because that is when Shelia would often come in.

As a little boy of 5 or 6, I did not understand her disability.

So, when she would talk, it would often be loud and simply too hard for me to understand.

I now realize she was simply trying to be nice to me, but it was a very uncomfortable experience for me.

Looking back, I regret feeling that way because I understand the nature of her deafness and speech.

Her inability to hear had hindered her ability to talk, which is a very common condition.

Folks like this are often called deaf/mutes because they can neither hear nor speech properly.

And I am sure their disability is compounded by people who give them strange looks or simply walk away.

Technology has advanced and been a great help to these people who were often called deaf and dumb...

Even though, most are far from dumb.

It is simply their lack of ability to communicate that made most people give them that inaccurate label.

In our nation, there are plenty of helpful resources for folks who are born deaf and mute.

Schools and even work environments help these people feel more accepted than ever before.

But that is not the case in other parts of the world where people still shun deaf mutes.

In Asia, parents still abandon children who have this condition, and the kids are often forced to the streets and become lifetime beggars.

Though that sounds harsh, history shows that deaf mutes had a much harder time in years past.

Some people groups in the world would also kill children who were born deaf and mute.

And though the people in the area around Israel didn't do that in Jesus' day, life would be very difficult for a deaf mute.

In Israel, the religious leaders would see the disability as judgment from God.

In Gentile lands, deaf mutes would be outcasts.

Often seen as mentally unstable if not altogether mad men.

So, life was difficult if you were a deaf mute.

With your tongue tied and your ears clogged, you often lived in your own little world.

It was not a pleasant way of life to say the least.

Which makes the verses we are about to read all the more incredible..

So, if you will, take your Bibles and turn to Mark 7:31...

We are going to watch Jesus heal a deaf mute on the pages of Scripture.

Mark is the only one who records this incredible miracle, and it certainly a scene that once again demonstrates the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

I want to read this passage straight through and then we work out way slowly through it.

Mark 7:31...

*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 ^[g]impediment of his tongue ^[r]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.”*

We will look at this passage in 3 parts...

I. The Desperation of the Sick (31-32)

II. The Operation of the Savior (33-35)

III. The Observation of the Strangers (36-37)

So, let's begin with....

I. The Desperation of the Sick (31-32)

Verse 31...

³¹ Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis.

There are times when I like to take the long way home...

When we head to Whitmire from here, it is faster to go I20 to I26, and then hop off of the Whitmire exit.

I can be home in 1 hr and 15 minutes that way, and at times, that is the best way to go.

But there are times when I go 178 to 391 to 176 and go through Bateburg, Prosperity, and Newberry.

It takes a little longer but sometimes since I love to fish, I simply like to cross over the lake on the way to Whitmire.

Ill even do that on the way to Harbison from here.

Sometimes, I'll take Hwy 6 to Lake Murray Blvd just so I can cross over the dam and see the lake.

Crazy I know, but it is still true.

Well, I mentioned this last week but Jesus is taking the long route to Decapolis.

Last week, we watch Jesus turn his back upon the land of Israel and head north to Tyre, which is Gentile land.

It was a symbolic turn away from Israel and the Jews of the land who He came to save.

Though some Jews had repented of their sins and believed the gospel.

The vast majority of Israel had not.

Even the religious leaders of Israel had rejected him and even sought to kill Him.

So Jesus headed out of Israel and into the pagan Gentile land of Tyre.

IT was symbolic of how the gospel would not just be for Israel and the Jews but would go into the entire world.

Now, we don't know all that Jesus did in this region.

We just have a few glimpses into this detour of sorts.

Last week, we watched Him cast a demon out of a young girl because her faith-filled mother kept asking Jesus to do it.

And he did.

Yet, in the very next passage, Jesus is leaving Tyre and it says that he heads through Sidon on his way to Decapolis.

Here's a map of this region of the world.

And we can loosely trace Jesus' path from Tyre to Sidon down to Decapolis.

It would have been roughly a 6 month journey through some rugged mountains and hills.

And the point is to use this time to train the disciples.

Their faith is still very young.

And Jesus would use this time away from the crowds for some intensive teaching.

It would be Jesus and the 12 walking in this barren land on the way to Decapolis.

And he would be sharing incredible truths with them.

But eventually this journey would end as they arrived at Decapolis...

Look at verse 32....

32 They *brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they *implored Him to lay His hand on him.

What is the saying?

If you want it to rain, just wash your car.

If you want your kids to forget something, simply tell say “You need to remember this no matter what.”

And in the gospel of Mark if you want a crowd to gather in your city, simply invite Jesus to town.

Now, Decapolis is a Gentile area.

It was an area of heavy Greek influence.

There would be statues of false gods and goddesses everywhere.

So, the question is why would they be drawn to Jesus?

If your remember way back in Mark 5 when Jesus crossed over the Sea of Galilee and healed the demoniac.

He was a man who was so scary that he lived in the hill country all alone.

Yet, Jesus cast a legion of demons out of him into a group of pigs who ran into the sea.

Well, that man wanted to go with Jesus after that encounter, but Jesus told him No.

And in Mark 5:20, it says that man “went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis ^[e]what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.”

This demon possessed man began the first missionary to the Gentiles, and his ministry must have been effective because when Jesus show up...

The crowds are bringing people to Jesus in order for Him to heal them.

In this passage, they bring a deaf and mute man to Jesus.

We have seen this desperation before in the gospel of Mark.

A group of desperate friends lowered a lame man down into Jesus’ pulpit.

A desperate dad left his sick daughter to find Jesus.

A desperate woman reached out her hand just to touch Jesus clothes.

How many clues do we need that desperation is a good thing to feel when you come to Jesus?

Jesus saves desperate people with desperate hearts.

And these desperate friends bring this desperate deaf and mute man to Jesus.

There was no medicine in those days.

No technology.

No miracle ear.

No speech therapy.

If you were deaf and mute, it was a life sentence.

People thought you were crazy.

People shunned you.

People viewed you as unintelligent, even though you they were wrong.

Yet, the little world of this deaf and mute was about to collide with the Creator of the world.

Now, that we have seen the desperation of the sick....

Let's move to....

II. The Operation of the Savior (33-35)

Verse 33...

³³ Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself,

I love this....

Jesus takes him away from the crowd...

It is time for one on one with Jesus.

There are people everywhere, yet Jesus leads this man away from the crowd..

Maybe it is a side street..

Maybe they step into a house...

And there is something to be learned here..

First, it is the care of the Savior.

This man is not just a face in the crowd.

Jesus knows every intimate detail of his life.

This is a man who would have always been lost in the crowd.

He would have been a man who had always lacked the crucial ability to communicate with people.

His whole life would have been trampled down by the crowds.

Yet, Jesus pulls him aside.

He doesn't want to be known for his incredible healing power.

We will see that in a few verses.

Jesus simply wants to show attention to a man who may have never received 1 on 1 attention at any point in his life...

Yet, there is another side of this scene, and it is this...

The deaf and mute man needed to give his undivided attention to Christ.

Here was a man who lived a life looking over his shoulder.

His lack of hearing caused him to be on edge every moment of his life.

His reaction time to things would have been slower than most because of his disability.

So, Jesus pulls him aside and looks him in the eye.

You see, crowds are places of safety for most people.

I have spent a lot of time before crowds.

Though I have only been a preacher for a short time, I spent many years teaching Sunday school.

And it is interesting what you see in crowds of people.

But what I have definitely noticed is that crowds give us a sense of security.

There are often crucial teaching times in a lesson or sermon where the Word of God is clearly convicting in the lives of people in the crowd.

And at those times, I have noticed all types of crowd reactions.

Some people will be hanging on every word.

Some will seem to be in deep thought.

Yet, there will also be people in a crowd at these times talking to a neighbor, or distracting a friend...

Or even laughing...

I have truly seen it all in these situations.

And the truth is that crowds are great places to hide.

What each of you witness here each Sunday morning and night and Wednesday night...

Is not a man standing up to speak to a crowd.

What you witness here is the God speaking through His Word directly to every heart here.

The pulpit is not an 8 lane highway.

It is two way street where God communicates His word to each individual heart.

And that is the picture here..

As much as the man needs Jesus' undivided attention....

Jesus also needs this man's undivided attention.

And the Lord needs your undivided attention every time He speaks in His Word.

After the two are alone, Jesus uses some sign language of his own to solve this man's problem.

Look at the next part of verse 33...

and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva;

The first thing that Jesus does is put His fingers in the man's ears.

It is a clear sign to the man that this is His problem.

His ears are broken.

They don't function properly, and Jesus is letting the man know that He understands the problem.

Then Jesus spits and takes the saliva and places it on the man's tongue.

Now, look it is not dishonoring to Jesus to be a little grossed out by this.

It was simply Jesus way of communicating to this man that his tongue was chained.

He couldn't form words because he had never heard words.

So, Jesus touches his tongue.

And then sign language #3 begins in verse 34...

³⁴ *and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He *said to him, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!"*

Jesus then looks up to heaven, a clear indication to the man that God was going to be the One who healed Him..

Even Gentiles believed that their gods were up in the heavens.

And so Jesus looks heavenward, and then he lets out a big sigh..

Now, people who are deaf and mute are excellent in other areas of communication, and the man would have definitely noticed Jesus' sigh...

And this is not the normal sign that we are used to...

Where we blow our breath and roll our eyes in frustration..

Jesus is not bothered to heal this man.

No, this is a sigh similar to what you would give if you heard a young child had died...

It is the head shaking sigh of sadness, where you feel the weight of the tragedy...

And right here, Jesus sighs because of the incredible effect of sin in the world.

This deaf and mute man who was made in God's image was never designed to be deaf and mute...

No, God had designed man and woman to be perfect in every way....

Adam and Eve had full use of all their senses.

They were perfect creatures serving a perfect God until they sinned.

Then the whole world changed.

Not only did they fall, the whole creation fell.

Sin entered.

Death entered.

Disease entered.

And that broke God's heart.

It still breaks God's heart to see the suffering and disease that comes from sin.

And here Jesus is sighing over the effects of sin.

He has sympathy because this man is suffering from the effects of a broken world.

It is the same sympathy that fills your heart when you see children who live in horrible conditions because their parents made horrible choices.

It makes you want to go and grab those kids and give them a new home.

It breaks your heart.

And Jesus' heart is broken over the effect that the fallen world has had on this man.

And so, he cries out for the man's ears to be opened...

And in verse 35, we see the result....

³⁵ And his ears were opened, and the ^[a]impediment of his tongue^[r] was removed, and he began speaking plainly.

I pray that no one you ever get tired of seeing Jesus miraculously heal people.

Because this is certainly a miracle.

It is one thing to go from deaf to hearing, but it is much more difficult to go from no speaking to speaking...

Verse 35 says that he spoke plainly.

WE shouldn't be surprised.

Jesus always heals completely.

He isn't like those phony healers of His day or even our day...

Who only heal partially.

Lame men that Jesus heal don't limp away, they leap for joy.

The blind go from no seeing to seeing immediately.

And the mute go to speaking perfectly.

This is the creative power of Jesus Christ.

You need a new eyes, you get them.

You need new ears, you get them.

You need a perfectly function tongue, you get it.

There's no speech therapy here.

Just like hitting the mute button on the remote, you go from silence to perfect speech.

That is true healing.

It is immediate. It is verifiable. It is complete.

That is the healing that comes from the hand of God.

And now that we have seen the Desperation of the Sick...

And the Operation of the Savior....

Let's close with...

III. The Observation of the Strangers (36-37)

Verse 36....

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.”

You heard of riddles before, right?

For instance, what gets wetter the more it dries?

A towel.

Well, in verse 35 gives us another riddle...

Who is permitted to speak but not able, and then able to speak but not permitted?

The answer is this deaf and mute man in Mark 7.

When we first meet him, he is permitted to speak but unable to do so.

Once Jesus heals him, he is now able to speak but not permitted to do so.

In some ways, you sympathize with him..

His mouth has never been filled with words, but the One who gave him words to speak tells him to not speak.

I need to be clear.

WE must always obey the Lord.

He has a reason for his commands, and in this case, Jesus does want people to see him as only a healer.

He does not want more crowds only interested in what physical healings HE can provide.

He wants people to repent and trust in Him because of Who he is as the Savior of the world.

And on top of that, Jesus' mission is not complete.

He didn't come just to heal people and head back to heaven.

The gospel is not Jesus can give you health when you trust in Him.

The gospel is that Jesus came to die on a cross in the place of sinners.

And that he was resurrected from the dead to prove that God accepted his sacrifice for sin.

All of that is ahead of Jesus at this point in time.

He doesn't need any distractions from that mission of going to the cross and then rising from the dead.

So, he tells people again and again to not tell of his healing or even of his identity.

There is a road ahead that he must travel and he has no desire to be sidetracked from his purpose of dying in the place of sinners like you and me.

So, he tells a man who can now speak to remain silent.

However, he nor his friends listen and they tell everyone they see.

And what do they proclaim to everyone?

Look at verse 37....

He has done all things well...

What a short statement but what a big truth...

Simply put, Jesus did everything well.

Guess what is true of you and me?

We have not done everything well.

WE have lied and stolen and taken the Lord's name in vain.

We have lusted and gossiped and coveted.

We have been impatient and unloving and unkind.

And guess what?

Contrary to the jokes we tell, Peter is not standing in your way at the pearly gates.

Perfection is.

The truth is that you need a perfect life to get o heaven.

And you are doomed because none of us are perfect.

That is, none of us but Christ.

And the message of the gospel is that you can get credit for doing all things well by repenting of your sin and trusting in Him.

You need to do all things well in order to see God, and the good news, the greatest news is that Jesus has done all things well in your place.

And beyond that, he has paid the price that you owe to God for doing everything wrong.

In his perfect life and perfect death, Jesus has earned the righteousness that you need to enter heaven.

And that righteousness can be yours if you will repent of your sin this day and turn in faith alone to Christ alone.

Conclusion

As a teenager, I was faithful in my church attendance.

And it is amazing what I can remember about those times I went to church.

I could still walk in that church and find the pew where me and granddad sit every week.

I could show you exactly where my grandma sat in the choir.

I can tell you the husband and wife that sat in front of us.

I can tell you the names of the two preachers that were there while I attended.

I still see the mirror that sat upon the organ so that the lady who played the organ knew to stop once the offering had been collected.

I can show you the parking spot where I parked every week.

I can even remember the apostles creed that we recited every week.

But for the life of me, there is one thing that I cannot remember no matter how hard I try.

I cannot remember one word of any sermon that I heard preached there.

Not one.

Even though the preacher opened the Bible and preached for 30 minutes each week, to this day, I have no idea what he said.

Do you know how the teacher sounds in Charlie Brown cartoons?

Wonk, wonk, wonk wonka.

That is the same thing I heard for all those years, and you know why?

I was as deaf as the man in the beginning of this passage.

I had ears but they could not hear.

And I am so grateful to the Lord that he unstopped them one day in 1997...

And since that day when the Lord in his mercy unstopped my ears,.....

I have never got tired of listening to Him every time
I hear His word preached.

But I tell that story to say this...

Don't be the one who comes every week and leaves
as deaf as you were when you entered.

Jesus always said, "He who has ears let him hear."

And the Lord can give you spiritual ears this
morning if you will turn from your sinful ways and
turn to Him...

And the promise of the gospel is that you will never
hear the same again.

Let us pray.