

Mark 7:31-8:26

Well, if you remember last week at the end of our study we saw Jesus in new territory as He had departed the **region and was now in what we would call modern-day Lebanon**. While in this place he had ministered to a woman who had a daughter that was demon possessed.

If you remember this woman was seen repeatedly imploring the Lord for His healing touch over her daughter **and eventually the Lord granted her request saying** that she could go her way and that the demon had gone out of her daughter...**and as this woman came to her house** we were told that she found that indeed at the Word of the Lord it was so.

I want to remind you that as the Lord spoke with this woman He made it clear that He had first been sent to the people of Israel...**however even the little puppies in the home** had access to the crumbs **and as Jesus said this and ministered** to this woman **He made it clear that He was indeed** willing to minister to the Gentile world as well.

I think this scenario and others that are seen this week are glimpses of what would become the sharing of the gospel of Jesus to the whole world. **For the disciples this would have been shocking to think about and witness** for the idea that most Jewish people had was that they **were to be separate** from the Gentiles and that the Gentile world was to be avoided.

So let's continue here if you look at verse 31 of chapter 7 which says **Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of**

Galilee. So Jesus leaves the area of Lebanon and He now heads to the East and then the South and finds Himself in the area of the Decapolis.

Now the Decapolis if you look at a map is found on the East side of the Sea of Galilee and just for some brief information this was territory that belonged to the half-tribe of Manasseh. During the days of Jesus the Decapolis which is also known as “Ten Cities” was mostly inhabited by Gentiles, not Jews and the area had a strong Greek influence and residents of this region answered directly to the Roman governor in Syria.

Now one of these 10 cities was a city by the name of Gadara and this should ring a bell as we recently heard about this city back in Mark 5...and this was right after the disciples had gone through the storm and the Lord if you remember was asleep in the boat as the disciples were fighting for their lives...and then when the disciples cried out to Jesus if you remember Jesus rebuked the storm and all was calm.

And then when they got to the other side there was a man who was possessed by multiple demons that had come and fell before Jesus and the Lord set this man free and if you remember the demons had been sent into a herd of pigs that promptly ran off a cliff.

The people of the city had come to Jesus after this and they asked Him to leave and I just want to read to you what we saw in Mark 5:18-20 which says this ¹⁸ **And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him.** ¹⁹ **However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.”** ²⁰ **And he**

departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.

So this demon possessed man who was set free we are told went into the Decapolis and told everyone what Jesus had done for Him...Remember when Jesus was in this region before He had been asked to leave, the people wanted Him gone, they were more concerned about their pigs than the fact the demon possessed man that no one could tame was liberated.

Let's see what happens this time if you look at verse 32 which says **³²Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him.** Well, that's a different response than before isn't it? Now they want to bring those that are suffering to the Lord...and where do you think they heard about the power and authority of Jesus? I think it was probably from the man that had been set free previously.

I want you to know tonight that your testimony can have a great effect on the world around you. You simply sharing what Jesus has done for you can be a big blessing. I know that my life and how the Lord has changed me has ministered to many that I have spoken to...It gives people hope to hear that there can be freedom from drugs and alcohol and that those lost in sin can in Jesus find freedom and strength to overcome.

I may be able to minister to a particular group of people but you also have a testimony that can minister to people as well. Every person has a testimony of the work of Jesus and the love that is found in Him and we should share it freely and liberally. Some of you might think that you don't really have a testimony because you have really always

followed Jesus but I would say to you that if Jesus has saved you it's a miracle in itself whether He did so when you were young or when you were old.

So the people of the region heard Jesus was in the vicinity and one that was deaf and couldn't speak very well was brought before Jesus and they were really begging Jesus to heal this man.

And then look at verses 33-35 which say ³³And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."

³⁵Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly.

I appreciate that Jesus does this miracle in private. Jesus did not look for the miracles to be some kind of show to the people but instead He was concerned about the individual as the Lord took this man to the side.

When the people came to Jesus they wanted Him to lay His hands on the man to heal Him but notice Jesus didn't do that at all but instead put His fingers in His ears and spat and touched his tongue and then He said the word "Ephphatha" which means "be opened" and we are told that right away this man was healed.

So what can we learn from this? I think we can learn that there is not a formula of how Jesus heals a person. When someone comes and asks for prayer that God would heal them there isn't a little guide book we get out and a 10 step solution to how the Lord might heal someone.

God is incredible in the variety of ways that He healed people.

Sometimes He would just speak a Word, other times He would touch people and they were healed, sometimes He told people to go and wash and then there were times like these that He would do things that no one would expect.

The healing touch of Jesus can look very different from person to person. Sometimes God heals someone immediately, sometimes He might use a doctor, sometimes it can take time, sometimes it doesn't happen until that person passes on into eternity.

Jesus cannot and will not be put in a box when it comes to how He heals a person and we should never try to place Him in one. Instead we should humbly go before the Lord and ask for that gift of healing and then move forward in our faith trusting the Lord will work according to His will.

So you can imagine this man was probably overjoyed that he could hear and rather than needing speech therapy to aid in being able to speak more clearly he instead was speaking clearly right away.

Look at verses 36-37 which say ³⁶**Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it.** ³⁷**And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."**

We might look at this and wonder why Jesus chose not to allow many to share the miraculous works that had been done through Him on their behalf...A few things come to mind. First, if people shared about

Jesus without having a full revelation about who He was it could distort what others thought about Him.

Second and you might write this down and do some searching on this in the scriptures but you might write down the phrase “My time had not yet come” when you see this in the Gospels it becomes clear that there was a very definite time table that Jesus was on. He knew that people wanted to elevate Him or to push Him forward as King in a political power move but He had a mission to fulfill and so often He would tell people to stay silent because the time simply had not yet arrived for Him to be known publicly the way they may have wanted Him to be known.

As everyone heard about Jesus and they observed His life notice they said that He had done all things well. Certainly that is true of Jesus that He has done all things well.

Let's move on here if you look at chapter 8 verses 1-3 which say **In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, ²“I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. ³And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.”**

So here we have Jesus in the region of the Decapolis and we'll learn here that He was out in the wilderness and there was a large crowd that had gathered and we are told that for three days this crowd had been with the Lord and they at this point have nothing to eat and the Lord was thinking about the people and He knew that if He dismissed them that some of them would faint if they didn't have a meal.

It would seem that the people had an intense desire to be with Jesus so much so that hearing Him and being near Him was of more value than the next meal they were going to partake of. I think that's something to think about when it comes to our own lives. How far am I willing to go to serve and to know Jesus?

I think often times we are so focused on what we have going on in life that we miss out on the intimacy of just stopping and being with Jesus. How often do we get up in the morning and there are a million other tasks on our minds and being with Jesus and spending time with Him having a spiritual filling sadly isn't even on that list?

I think its sad that when it comes to our favorite sports team or our favorite vacation spots that we will go all out to fulfill that desire we have to participate in...but when it comes to Jesus so often we can so quickly find a reason not to be with Him, not to study His Word, not to be in prayer or even a reason not to attend church.

If it was the day before Christmas and we needed to shop you better believe if we have a stomach ache or we are tired we are still going out to do that shopping...If it's New Years Eve and our friends are having a party you better believe we will stay out late or what about when the Chiefs playoff game is at a -25 degree wind chill and you have tickets? Do you think you would go?...but when it comes to Jesus it's so easy to find a reason not to seek Him or be with His people.

It's perhaps a bit convicting to see how full of desire these people were to just be with the Lord and hear from Him. You and I can be with Him just like these people could for the Spirit of God dwells within us and yet so often we are just too busy or we simply don't have the desire.

It was a sacrifice for these people to be with Him...and they were willing to pay it. I would ask us tonight do we sacrifice those things that might be important to us because Jesus is more important and more desired than anything else? I ask myself just the same.

So the Lord presents this problem to the disciples and He is asking them what are going to do about this...and then look at verse 4 which says **4Then His disciples answered Him, “How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?”** Now this is a little perplexing to me and I wonder if you are thinking about this also as we are reading this...Doesn't this whole scenario seem familiar to us? I kind of seem to think that not that long ago in our study of Mark we saw something similar didn't we?

Now on the timetable of the life of Jesus it may have been several months since we last saw Jesus feeding the 5,000 but I would think that the disciples would have quickly recalled that Jesus can and HAS provided food when there clearly wasn't enough to feed the multitude that followed Him.

And yet in this case the disciples as they are asked simply said that out here in the wilderness where there is nothing available how will we find enough. You and I might sit here in our church this evening and say “well shouldn't they have known that Jesus could provide?” “Shouldn't they have remembered that Jesus can provide something from nothing?” “Shouldn't they have known from their experience that Jesus can and does work things out?”

I would say tonight that perhaps we should take a mirror and look at ourselves and our own lives and the situations we find ourselves

facing. How often are we like the disciples here in this narrative? How often do we forget what Jesus has done?

I don't know what it is but the human mind as we walk with Jesus can so quickly forget about His faithfulness, we can so quickly forget that Jesus has done so much in us and around us. We so quickly forget how many times He has helped us through trials and we can so quickly come to a place of despair and unbelief just like the disciples were here in this situation.

Even the people of Israel often forgot about God's supernatural provision...There were times they were thirsty in the wilderness and they were wondering whether they would die or not and God would provide from the rock a supernatural flow of water. What about manna? Hello!! That stuff came from nowhere and it was given to thousands upon thousands and day by day to the Israelites as they were in the wilderness. Often times God's people forgot about His power over the armies of the world, and His ability to rescue them in deep and great difficulties just as He had delivered them from Egypt.

It's so easy to forget about the faithfulness of God...We should learn from this just as the disciples are going to. Let's see what happens here if you look at verses 5-10 which say ⁵He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?"

And they said, "Seven."

⁶So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples to set before *them*; and they set *them* before the multitude. ⁷They also had a few small fish;

and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them. ⁸ So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. ⁹ Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away, ¹⁰ immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha.

This time the Lord asked the disciples directly what they had in their possession and we learn that they had seven loaves of bread...and the Lord very similarly to the last time he fed the 5,000 had the people sit down and the loaves were blessed and given to the disciples to place before the people and there were also a few small fish and everyone was found to be full.

This time we are told there were 4,000 that were fed and this did not include women and children so just a huge multitude of people that the Lord blessed and ministered to through a very small amount and we should be reminded that Jesus can do an awful lot with the little that we bring to Him. 2 Corinthians 9:8 reminds us saying ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

Now there are some that make the argument that the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 are the same event but I want to just point out to you that there are several differences between these two accounts.

First we notice the number that is given is different, second we can see that in the feeding of the 5,000 there were 5 loaves and two fish while here in this account we had seven loaves and an undisclosed

amount of fish. The locations of the two different miracles are also different this one taking place in the area of the Decapolis while the first one took place in Bethsaida on the northeastern side of the Sea of Galilee.

The feeding of the 5,000 was in a Jewish area while the feeding of the 4,000 took place in a predominantly Gentile location. In the feeding of the 5,000 there were 12 baskets of leftovers while in this feeding there were 7 large baskets collected and these were like laundry baskets full.

The accounts are different but the lessons similar and some draw the conclusion that perhaps Jesus was teaching the disciples that the Gentiles were just as important to Him and just as able to receive the miracles and the blessings as the Jewish people were... Later on in the book of Acts we'll see that the Lord plainly reveals that the gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ is just as much for the Gentiles as it is for the Jewish people.

We might even compare what's happening here with a general acceptance of Jesus by the Gentiles to what happens next in our text if you look at verses 11-12 which say **¹¹ Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. ¹² But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation."**

In verse 10 we learned that Jesus and the disciples had gone back across the Sea of Galilee to the other side to a place called Dalmanutha and again if you look at a map you'll see that this location

was just to the south and west of Capernaum on the western side of the lake.

You kind of get the idea the disciples are just going back and forth from one side to the other repeatedly as we look at the Gospel of Mark.

Notice that the Pharisees are again in the picture and we have learned a lot about them but the biggest thing we have seen is they were deniers of who Jesus was and they were always looking for a way to accuse Jesus of wrong doing or working to prove that He wasn't anyone that was all that special or worthy of being listened to...and so here they are again and they are disputing with Him and even demanding that He produce a sign from heaven to prove who He was.

One thing I have learned in life is that Jesus will not be bossed around and He will not just do what we demand and even here He responds by simply denying their request...now in the same account over in the book of Matthew 16:2-4 we get a little more information if you listen to that it says ²**He answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; ³and in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times. ⁴A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” And He left them and departed.**

Clearly Jesus is frustrated with the Pharisees at this point. They had so much information before them and so many different witnesses and evidences that He was the Messiah and yet they rejected

Him...they could look at the weather and determine what the day would be like but they couldn't see who Jesus was even though all signs pointed plainly to the fact He was the Messiah.

When I read these verses I am reminded that there was a time that even John the Baptist had some doubts about who Jesus was...and I just want to read to you from the gospel of Luke 7:18-23 which say the following ¹⁸Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. ¹⁹And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

²⁰When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' " ²¹And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight.

²²Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that *the* blind see, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised, *the* poor have the gospel preached to them. ²³And blessed is *he* who is not offended because of Me."

The reality was there was way more than enough evidence that revealed who Jesus was...the Pharisees simply rejected it...I don't think there was anything that Jesus could have done to cause these men to believe...they had hardened their hearts and if you remember they had even come to the point that they said that Jesus did what He did by the power of Satan...So the Lord saw right through them when

they came and He was not about to get bullied or pressed into anything by these religious individuals.

Look at verse 13 which says ¹³**And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side.** I have to say if I'm a disciple I might be saying "seriously Lord...we just got here a few minutes ago and here we go getting back into the boat and leaving."

Look at verses 14-16 which say ¹⁴**Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat.** ¹⁵**Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."**

¹⁶**And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have no bread."**

Now in the shuffle of going from one thing to the next the disciples had forgotten to go and buy bread so we get the idea that Jesus landed on the shore, the Pharisees met Him and demanded that He perform a sign and then they left right away and you can imagine the disciples began to look around nervously as they know in their minds that they have no food with them.

And then the Lord (and I think Jesus knew that they didn't have much bread) but the Lord uses this to minister to them as He says that they need to be aware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod...**Now in the scriptures leaven is almost always a picture of sin and how it can** and does permeate the lives of those that participate in it.

The disciples as they hear this they are immediately thinking of the physical bread that they don't have in their possession and so they are

thinking “Oh boy here we go Jesus is going to give us a demerit for our failures here” Jesus though we will see was talking about something spiritual if you look at verses 17-21 which say this

¹⁷ But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, “Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? ¹⁸ Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?”

They said to Him, “Twelve.”

²⁰ “Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?”

And they said, “Seven.”

²¹ So He said to them, “How is it you do not understand?”

I think there were a few lessons here for the disciples. First, Jesus is saying to them that physical bread is not the problem and He is saying to them do you once again not understand that I can produce something out of nothing...He then points them to the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 and He reminds them that as the miracles took place they found that they had more than enough in their possession.

I think spiritually speaking the disciples should have been able to deduce that Jesus was talking about how the customs of both the Pharisees and those of Herod could infect their thinking just like leaven effects a loaf of bread.

You know it doesn't take much leaven at all to take over the whole lump of dough does it? Just a little pinch is sufficient.

Jesus was saying to watch out for the sin of the Pharisees and really the Pharisees as we have seen were working against what Jesus was doing very directly. They were doubting the works of Jesus, the methods of Jesus, the teachings of Jesus and instead they promoted a self-righteous religion to the people.

If you think about it the Pharisees were supposed to be the example of what it meant to follow God. They were on the outside quite religious and yet on the inside they were full of dead men's bones Jesus will say over in Matthew 23. The Pharisees would make lengthy prayers and they would wear special clothing and they would even fast twice a week and yet Jesus was firmly against them on repeated occasions.

We've talked about this a lot recently but you and I should be known for the deep inward work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives...Yes, we should be displaying holiness to the world around us but we must be just as holy and set apart to God in our hearts and in secret as we are out in public...The inward life and the outward life must be consistent.

And then the Lord spoke of the leaven of Herod...And the leaven of Herod is a little more challenging I think to fully understand and I don't want to stand up here and say this is perfectly what it was but I do think we can learn some things if we just look at this man's life. Herod was the political ruler of the area of Galilee and if you remember there were many that wanted to come and make Jesus king by force having a kind of kingdom now attitude. Jesus very clearly did not want that.

I want to be careful here not to get off in the weeds but I think we can sometimes get into the idea of a kingdom now mentality rather than resting in the fact that Jesus will one day come and rule and reign and make things right once again.

Now I am not saying we should not be involved in the political process in our nation...I believe we should vote, I believe we should participate in local governments as the Lord leads and if God were to open a door for you to serve in a political capacity I would fully support that...**but politics is not what is going to help our nation. Jesus is what will change our nation.** Politics will never be the answer.

In some ways I think we are not as involved as we should be with the political system that surrounds us...For too long I think we have been silent and so many choose just not to vote and often times people will say what's the point if we are all going to heaven in the end anyways...some think the system is too far corrupted to participate in it...some think our nation is too far gone...some say there is no evidence in the Bible for anyone being involved in the political world.

I saw an interesting quote the other day that stated that multiple people were involved in politics in the Bible...**Esther was involved with the king as she petitioned him** to spare the people of Israel...**Daniel found himself on numerous occasions before kings** and those in authority...**David was the king of Israel...Paul found himself before kings speaking to them and pleading with them to follow Christ...John the Baptist stood up to a ruler calling out his sin...**Even Jesus found Himself involved in the political system that put Him to death. **These individuals as they served God and they served the people of God**

found themselves right in the middle of the political powers of the world.

At the end of the day both those of the Pharisees and those of Herod were both looking to hold onto and gain power. The Pharisees were desperate to hold onto religious power while the leaven of Herod focused on political power.

Jesus was saying to the disciples that they needed to be aware of the false thoughts of man and the false thoughts of God's kingdom that were often presented...The disciples had to be careful not to fall into these false mindsets that permeated the culture around them.

Look with me at one final section here tonight if you look at verses 22-26 which say ²²Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. ²³ So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.

²⁴And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking."

²⁵Then He put *His* hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. ²⁶ Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town."

As Jesus was in a city called Bethsaida a blind man was brought to Him...and they asked that He would simply touch this man but instead Jesus once again took the man away from the crowd out of the town.

He then spit on his eyes and that's a little weird right and then laid hands on Him and asked what He saw...the man responded that He could see but what He saw was men that looked like trees...The Lord then touched Him a second time and he saw everything as he should have.

He was then sent away to his home and told not to tell anyone about what had happened.

Now this is a strange miracle I will admit for this is the only miracle in all the gospels that Jesus actually healed someone in two separate steps...Some ask did Jesus just not have all the power that He needed to heal Him with one laying on of hands? Some ask if Jesus made a mistake here?

I don't think so myself and I think there could be a few things to glean from this. First, could it be that there were two separate miracles that took place for two separate issues? One to give the man the ability to physically see and a second one to give him the mental capacity to interpret what he saw? I see no issue with this myself.

The fact is Jesus has had to heal me many times over as I have gone through life. The Lord almost immediately delivered me from the desire to take drugs while it took months for Him to work in my life to the point that I stopped cursing...The Lord is always at work in my life making me more like Him and changing me and challenging me in so many ways.

We all need a constant touch of Jesus in our lives don't we? I know I certainly do and desire for His hand to be upon me continually.

Jesus heals individuals in a variety of ways doesn't He? He can do so through the physicians, He can do so supernaturally, He can do so when we are at the lowest points of our lives, He can even do it when life is good. The ways of God are beyond our understanding.

I believe it is our duty as believers to trust that He knows what He is doing and He knows the plans that He has for us. I don't want to make light of suffering and sickness as I know it is so very difficult for so many...what I can say is that Jesus can hear the cries of our hearts and He knows how to develop our character and help us and minister to us...and He absolutely has all authority to heal as He sees fit.

So tonight in closing I just pray the Lord will minister to us and next week I want to just give you some homework to read through and think about Mark 8:27-9:13 as we'll be exploring some pretty powerful scriptures.

Tonight if you need to get right with Jesus please come forward after the service as I would love to talk with you about our great Savior and let me pray for us and we'll worship the Lord.

Mark 7:31-8:26 “4,000 Fed”

Cross References

Chapter 7

Verse 31

Mark 5:18-20

Chapter 8

Verses 5-10

2 Corinthians 9:8

Verses 11-12

Matthew 16:2-4

Luke 7:18-23