

DECAPOLIS HEALING

Date: March 31, 2020

Scripture: Mark 7:31-37

Good morning! My name is Megan. This Lent season we are working through some of the miracles of Jesus shared with us across the gospel accounts. We are looking at how each of these miracles points us to the greatest of all miracles, which is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The miracle of Jesus we are focused on today is found in Mark 7:31-37. Before reading this Scripture, to give context to this passage, we need to look two chapters earlier in Mark.

In Mark chapter five Jesus healed an uncontrollable demon-possessed man who had a legion of demons. After Jesus cast the demons out and the man returned to his right mind, he begged to go with Jesus. We see in Mark 5:19-20 Jesus speaking, ¹⁹"Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled."

At this point in Jesus's ministry, He had fed thousands, walked on water and healed, as well as performed the miracle in this very region, captured in Mark 5. So when we get to Mark 7 and Jesus arrives in the Decapolis, the people have already heard of His miraculous powers. With that background, let's read Mark 7:31-37

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, and they begged him to lay his hand on

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him. ³³ 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 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.”

Now let's break this passage down verse by verse. As we see in verse 31, Jesus is back in the region of the Decapolis. Verse 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.”

The Scripture says, “And they”. We don't know who “they” are, what we know is they brought this man to Jesus, believing in Jesus's ability to heal. They knew if “they” could just get this man to Jesus, he would find healing.

It is very easy to simply read the words without pausing to think about the hardship this man had lived every day of his life to this point. This man was deaf and partially mute, meaning he was cut off from communication on both ends. He could not hear others communicating with him and he could not express himself to others.

Think about how isolating, lonely and frustrating this existence would be. You are completely cut off from the world of sound. You can't hear your loved one's voices. You can't hear laughter, the wind in the trees. You can't hear waves on the sea, birds in the air, music or singing.

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Additionally he could hardly talk, which means he would have a difficult time communicating his thoughts and his needs. This man would have been a prisoner in his own mind.

In the first part of verse 33 it says, "And taking him aside from the crowd privately..." We see Jesus's humility as well as His personal compassion and dignity for this man. Jesus does not put the man on display. And He does not use the man's affliction to draw a crowd and attention for His own gain.

Continuing in verse 33, "...he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue." Jesus could have spoken healing over this man, He could have said, "You are healed, now hear and speak." But that is not what Jesus does. Remember this man is deaf, physical touch and visual queues would be extremely important. He would not have been able to hear Jesus speaking to him.

Rather, to communicate to the man what He is about to do and that he could expect healing, we see Jesus being deeply personal and specific. Jesus visually and physically tells the man what He is about to do, first by putting His fingers into the man's ears and then spits and touches the man's tongue. In doing so, Jesus touched the two specific areas where the man needed healing.

Then looking up to heaven in verse 34, Jesus sighed. Jesus continues to use visual queues for the man to understand what is happening, physically looking up to heaven and releasing a sigh visible to the man. The man would be able to interpret. Jesus identified his afflictions and then turned his eyes to the God of heaven. And a sigh, a sigh revealing God's heart for all sickness and sorrow and suffering in the world.

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That our God is not a God way off in the distance, far removed from the suffering of man. He is a God who cares for us and feels our pain. He shares our burden.

Continuing in verse 34, then with the same voice that separated light from dark, He spoke "Ephphatha, be opened!" Jesus spoke directly to the man's condition. He gave the command to the man's ears that were shut and could not hear and to the man's tongue that was bound and could not speak clearly.

Verse 35, "And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly." Jesus healed the man's deafness instantly, as well as, gave the man the ability to speak clearly. Other translations of this verse are even more dramatic. The sense that chains of his tongue had been broken, the bond or prison had been loosened!

Think about this man and how this encounter would change his life forever, both physically and spiritually. Some group of family members, friends or neighbors who know you and know your struggles bring you to Jesus. You can't hear them, but you can tell from their body language that they are pleading with him. Then this man, Jesus, takes you aside from the crowd, it is just you and Him. He looks at you, only you, deep into your eyes. It's been years since someone has looked at you intentionally. You have been an outcast your entire life.

Without you being able to verbally communicate with Him, He knows everything you have endured and He knows your ailments. Then He touches them. Each ailment specifically and individually, while never breaking His gaze into your eyes. Then He looks up to heaven, you see His chest rise and fall. You are watching Him intently. As He is looking to heaven, somehow all at once there is a calm, there is a security,

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there is hope and there is also a sadness you can feel from Him. You see His mouth move and then sound comes flooding in. You can hear the crowd, voices, animals, laughter and as you go to speak, your tongue is no longer bound, your speech is clear and others can understand you.

And then verse 36, "And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it."

Jesus has released this man from the personal prison he has been living in and then tells him to tell no one. But this divine, personal encounter with the God of the Universe changed his life forever! He could not keep quiet.

Mark concludes with verse 37 by recording, "they were astonished beyond measure," saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

To understand the significance of this final verse, we need to see how it relates to other parts of the Bible. When the people of Decapolis hear what Jesus has done for this man, they come to the same conclusion and respond in a similar manner to how we see God respond to Jesus after being baptized in Mark 1.

Mark 1:11 says, "And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'" Additionally, the language in verse 37, "He has done everything well." also echoes the language of Genesis 1, which affirms God's work in creation. The final part of verse 37 says, "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak." This language echoes the Old Testament promise found in Isaiah 35. Verses 4-6 read, "Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold,

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your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

This miracle in Mark 7:31-37, shows Jesus's humility, compassion and power. But ask yourself, why is this specific healing recorded in the gospels? This healing of the deaf man among the Gentiles points to Jesus not only as the Messiah of the Jews, but of the Savior of the Gentiles. Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah 35.

What Jesus has come to do for you is no less dramatic than what He did for the man in Mark 7. He has come to break every chain of bondage and set our souls free from the prison of our sin. He is the Savior of the world, rescuing all those who place their trust in Him from every tribe and every language and every nation.

Thanks so much for joining me today and taking a look at the Mark 7 Decapolis Healing. Let me pray for us.

Jesus, You are Sovereign over all. You are the God of the Universe. You are the King of Kings and the Name above all names. And still, You are so deeply personal and specific with each one of us. Thank You for meeting us right where we are with all of our ailments, sin, pain and shame, all while looking into our eyes deeply, intently and lovingly. Thank You for going first, for loving us and for willingly making a way for us back to the Father. You alone are worthy of all of our praise. We love You. Amen.