



Mark - Lesson 7D

Chapter 7:31-37

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- Before we dive into tonight's teaching, I want to begin by providing some further clarification from our Mark 7C teaching.
 - I believe this clarification will provide valuable insight as to where we are moving to within Mark's gospel account.
 - Our clarification must first begin with terms and the two terms that I want to speak to are:
 - 1. The Age of the Gentiles
 - 2. The Church Age
 - Last week, I mentioned that the Syrophoenician woman was the first person (non-Jew) to understand what Jesus was saying through His parabolic teaching.
 - If you recall, this is where Jesus made the comment saying: "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." (Mark 7:27)
 - This comment was speaking to the reality that Jesus' mission was to present Himself to the Jewish people as their Messiah.
 - This promise of a coming Messiah was to be given exclusively to the Jew.
 - However, it is the woman's response that grasped Jesus' attention.
 - The woman's response was: "Yes Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the Children's crumbs". (Mark 7:28)
 - Her response revealed her understanding of God's word and her faith in the Messiah that God would provide.
 - She came to this conclusion because of the promises found in the Hebrew scriptures that God would bless the nations, including the Gentiles.
 - This is why she states Jesus' Messianic name "Son of David".
 - She knew that although Messiah would come, first for His own (Jews), that eventually the Gentiles would partake in their blessings, fulfilling the promises of old.
 - And to this end, Jesus' response to her response and faith in the promises of God was both encouraging and to be greatly commended.
 - It was from this revealing of truth that I posed a question: "When would that promise regarding this blessing for the Gentile responding to salvation have taken place from that time (her vantage point)?"
 - What dispensation (age/time) will this occur?
 - Well as you know that time is what we are in now, known as the Church Age.
 - And this time known as the "Church Age" is in existence until the "fullness of those who will respond to Christ in Faith in this time/age come – this includes the Gentile (non-Jew)."
 - And this Church Age is happening within this present "Age/Times of the Gentiles" meaning Gentiles being in ruling authority in the world.
 - This period and soon to be revealed time was a mystery to the disciples and the people of God as it was not revealed to Daniel in the Old Testament.
 - I mention these terms and these ages within time because as we move into

tonight's teaching, we are going to witness an interesting detail.

- This detail is going to provide us with potential clarity as to the disorientation of the disciples' understanding of the Kingdom Program.
- As well as provide us with how Israel's rejection of Jesus as Messiah was making the purpose of His first coming ever so clear.
- If I were to put a tag on tonight's text it would simply be: "Can you hear me now"
 - With that being said, I invite you to open your bibles and meet me in Mark 7:31-37.

Mark 7:31 Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis.

Mark 7:32 They *brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they *implored Him to lay His hand on him.

Mark 7:33 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;

Mark 7:34 and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He *said to him, "Ephphatha (Eph-pa-tha)!" that is, "Be opened!"

Mark 7:35 And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly.

Mark 7:36 And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it.

Mark 7:37 They were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

- Let's Pray.
- There was a game that dates back to the late 1870s, just after the invention of the telephone, called the Telephone game.
 - The rules to the game were simple: You gather a group of 3 or more people.
 - The person who starts the game begins with the phrase or statement that is to be passed down from one person to the next.
 - The goal is to get that original message to be passed down correctly from the first person to the last without allowing the phrase to be repeated.
 - Therefore, it's up to the person passing the phrase down to listen closely and repeat the phrase carefully and accurately.
 - It never becomes a surprise however, that the phrase that is initially uttered never ends up being the same phrase towards the end.
 - The phrase that begins like "Super-cala-fraga-listic-expi-ala-docious" turns into "The dandelion was super cool"
 - You see, if a message does not remain consistent from start to finish by listening to the one who is articulately stating the phrase, we end up garbling the message.
 - In a way, the religious leaders of that day were, for far too long, garbling the words of God and making it their own.
 - In turn, the people of God get a message that began with clarity, passed down

through the Torah, and have begun moving toward invalid interpretations.

- But thank God for Jesus! Because it would be through the incarnational reality of Jesus entering into the world, that He would be called out on mission to make clear what was made known centuries ago.
 - Tonight, we are going to see how, through Jesus' missional and teaching ministry, He is trying to get His disciples to see who He is – once again.
 - The question on the table tonight however is: Can they hear Him, now?
 - Pick me up at verses 31-32.

Mark 7:31 Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis.

Mark 7:32 They *brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they *implored Him to lay His hand on him.

- It's after Jesus has healed the Syrophenician's daughter from demon possession in the region of Tyre that Jesus and His disciples continue their expedition.
 - This travel takes them on an elaborate path around the region of Sidon.
 - You may recall that this region in Phoenicia (modern day Lebanon) was a majority Gentile region.
 - And Mark informs us that they are making their way towards the region of the Decapolis – known as the “ten-cities”.
 - Now before we move any further, let me give us some quick context here:
 - It's only a few chapters ago that we read about Jesus and His disciples having gone to this region where Jesus healed the man with a “legion of demons”.
 - It would be in this region, after Jesus had demonstrated great authority and power over the legion of demons, that Jesus received negative results from the people, all except one man – the one who was formally possessed.
 - It would be this Gentile man who would plead with Jesus to become His disciple.
 - This man recognized Jesus' authority and power, yet Jesus was not taking on Gentile disciples at the time.
 - However, Jesus gives the man an instruction before His departure and that was to proclaim to the ten-cities what Jesus had done for him. (Mark 5:20)
 - Check out how the man responds, in immediate obedience. Look at the text:

Mark 5:20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

- ◦ So it is this region that Jesus and the Disciples are traveling to from the region of Tyre.
- According to this route in which they traveled, this trip may have taken several weeks or even months”

- The question then becomes: “What was Jesus’ point of taking such a long detour around the Gentile region to the Decapolis?”
- Could it be that Jesus was using that extra time to teach His disciples?
- Some have argued that the terrain allowed easier travel from Sidon moving around to the Decapolis – that is definitely a possibility.
- However, I believe the answer is a bit simpler than that.
- Remember that Jesus has just been confronted with the religious leaders of Jerusalem.
 - Jesus’ ministry is experiencing increased persecution from the Pharisees which could potentially lead to pre-mature death.
 - Therefore, in an effort to escape the steadily growing rejection of the Jewish people and the pressure from the religious leaders, why not go to an area they wouldn’t dare frequent?
- In any case, it is upon the arrival of Jesus and the disciples in the Decapolis, Mark mentions that Jesus and His disciples are greeted by a group of people.
 - Now, we should find this detail quite intriguing and encouraging, because it seems as if a previous heralding of Jesus’ ministry from 2 chapters ago was successful!
 - Jesus’ ministry and presence go from having been previously rejected by the people of Decapolis, to now being warmly welcomed.
 - It becomes quite evident that the testimony of what Jesus did before with the man who had legions of demons has traveled far.
- There is a key applicational point here and that is: Consistency in proclaiming the Gospel message matters, even when it seems it's reaching no one.
 - A message that is worthy to be heralded is a message worthy to be received in its timing.
 - Even when you think no one wants to hear the news you carry, don’t stop sharing the message.
- It’s here in verse 32, that some of the people of Decapolis have brought before Jesus a man who “was deaf and spoke with difficulty”.
- Mark tells us that the man’s ailments consist of him not being able to hear and that he has some sort of speech impediment – perhaps because of his hearing condition.
 - The word “difficulty of speech” in the Greek is the word *mogilalos* (mog-ee-lalos) which means “speaking with difficulty or having an impediment of speech.”
 - It also means mute or unable to articulate.
- What’s interesting about this Greek word is that it’s rare.
 - It’s so rare that it only occurs here in the Greek New Testament (Mark 7:32) and in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew bible.
 - It is within Isaiah 35:6 that we find the other use of this word.
- Isaiah 35:6 is a passage promising the coming of God’s rule on earth. We will look at this text in a bit. Put a pin here for now.

- This promised intervention was already taking place in Jesus' ministry (cf. Mark 7:37; 1:15).
- What we can surmise from Jesus' excessive route choice in these Gentile regions was merely a shadow of what the Syrophoenician woman was expressing from earlier.
 - In other words, the coming rule of God on earth (The Messianic Kingdom) would be accomplished through Jesus Christ.
 - However, it would not come about how the Jewish people anticipated it.
- In His first coming, these signs and actions in which Jesus would perform were to point to His Authority as Messiah and His Power as God.
 - Isaiah 35:5 speaks to these works/acts as a sign of the Messiah. Check out the text really quickly:

**Isaiah 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.**

- It will also be that in His Second coming, Jesus' power and majestic reign will be widely known as He will reign in a physical, literal kingdom in the earth as King over all.
 - Recognize, that although these actions of Christ are being exhibited before the disciples' very eyes (the children of the house of Israel) they are still missing the identity of Christ as a whole.
 - It seems as if once again, the Gentiles are recognizing the uniqueness of Christ and His person far beyond what His disciples are seeing.
 - And perhaps there is confusion as to the Messiah they are seeing versus the Messiah these men have been told about.
 - This is what was stirring confusion with John the Baptist as he sent His disciples to ask Jesus if he had pointed to the wrong Messiah.
 - This confusion for the disciples is rooted in both the improper teaching of the religious leaders as well as Israel's national rejection of their Messiah.
 - So these teaching moments between Jesus and His disciples will be ongoing, until their eyes are open to see and their ears to hear for understanding.
 - Well it is this crowd, having brought this man with these physical ailments, that Jesus responds to the need. Check out verses 33 through 35.

**Mark 7:33 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;
Mark 7:34 and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He *said to him, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!"
Mark 7:35 And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly.**

- Mark tells us that upon hearing the need of this man and his condition, that Jesus

takes the man aside, privately to deal with him personally.

- I think it is worth slowing down to process this point because it speaks to the care of Christ.
 - That He is willing and able to deal with our struggles, our needs, our problems, privately.
 - We will see later on, even more, great care from the Christ.
- Now some may ask the question, beyond what I have just mentioned: “Why take the man aside? Why not heal him in front of everyone?”
 - The reality is that Jesus most certainly could have chosen a more public forum by which to demonstrate His power and healing ability.
 - However, I believe as mentioned before, this healing that Jesus was going to do had to be one in which this man needed to experience by himself.
- Let’s consider the facts: The man is deaf and he is mute.
 - Could it be that with the large crowd around him, that it could have been a potential distraction for him?
 - This experience of healing had to move beyond simple public formality and had to be a private reality for the man.
- Notice in verse 33, the method in which Jesus uses to heal this man. It’s unlike any healings that He has done up to this point.
 - Understand that Jesus has healed in many ways before. There is no set formula for healing that the Messiah had to follow.
 - In some instances, He simply spoke and things happened.
 - In other situations, He would touch the individuals because of their physical ailments, and they would be healed.
- But with this healing, Jesus did something quite unordinary, especially according to today’s standards. This went beyond the simple use of His hands.
 - He used His saliva to perform the healing.
 - Some of you are probably gaging right now just at the thought of another person touching you with their saliva, especially during the COVID era.
 - However, I want us to step outside of our 21st century bubble and consider the context of the first century.
- Within Jewish custom, including some Greek cultures, Jewish rabbis considered saliva to be a valid treatment for healing.
 - There are several ancient accounts of the use of saliva especially in curing blindness.⁵
- There is a famous story told by Tacitus (Hist.4.81) about how a blind man from Alexandria was cured by the saliva of the emperor Vespasian. (Take this for what it’s worth).
 - The implication of this story is that it was not the spittle in and of itself that healed the blind man but it was *specifically the emperor’s saliva, which was effective. Similarly here it is Jesus’ saliva which cures; it is effective.*
 - Some scholars think that Mark’s mention of this particular miracle could have

been documented for the purpose of showing his audience that Christ reigns supreme, even above the Roman rulers of that time.

- The Talmud also mentions an interesting story regarding spittle and its healing ability of “the first born”.
 - Check out this quote from the Talmud: Bava Basra 126b.

“A certain person once came before R. Hanina and said to him, 'I am sure that this man is firstborn'. R. Hanina said to him, 'How do you know?' — The person replied to him: 'Because when people came to his father, he used to say to them: "Go to my son Shikhath, who is firstborn and his saliva heals'. Might he not have been the firstborn of his mother only [but not of his father]? There is a tradition that the saliva of the firstborn of a father heals, but that of the firstborn of a mother does not heal.” (Bava Basra 126b)

- So with this context in mind, understand that this method was not foreign to those in the 1st and 2nd century.
 - Mark tells us that with this healing, Jesus does touch the man.
 - The question at this point can be raised: “Why can’t Jesus just say 'Ears be open, and Mouth speak!’?”
 - Wouldn’t that have been the easier solution?
 - Well with the healings of many throughout Mark’s account several were accomplished through touch as a sign of compassion for the people.
 - We see examples of this is in:
 - Mark 1:31 where Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law
 - Mark 1:41 where Jesus healed a Jewish leper (The first Messianic Miracle)
 - Mark 5:33 with the woman who had the issue of bleeding for 12 years
 - Mark 6:56 when Jesus and the disciples reach Gennesaret and are greeted by many who are looking to be healed.
 - In every instance, there is this visible representation of the compassion of Jesus in meeting the needs of the people through touch.
 - So this situation would not be too different – with the exception of the saliva.
 - It is here after Jesus puts his fingers in the mans ears, spits in his hand, and applies saliva to the man’s tongue, that Jesus looks up to heaven and takes a deep sigh.
 - In a way, we can see the significance of Jesus looking up to heaven as his hands are holding the man’s head.
 - This would allow the man to observe Jesus’ focus as to where and from whom this healing is coming from.
 - This opportunity of healing has been provided by way of the Father’s provision, the power by means of His Spirit, and the agent of healing by way of the Son.
 - In all things, we witness that the Son is dependent upon the Father for His needs.
 - And what a reminder that should be for believers in Christ!

- That if the Son is dependent upon the Father for all things, how much more should we be dependent upon the Lord for all things?
- Now notice that Jesus takes a “deep sigh”.
 - What is Jesus groaning about at this moment?
 - The word “deep sigh” in the Greek is *stenazo* which means to “express oneself involuntarily in the face of an undesirable circumstance.”
- Consider the conditions of this man for a moment:
 - Lord knows how long this man has been in this predicament.
 - The best means of communication at this time is gestures, pointing to things or places to convey thoughts or direction.
 - With 2 of the 5 senses down, the other senses become all the more alert – and one sense that this man is keen to is his sight.
- Jesus’ deep sigh comes from a place of much compassion as Jesus sees this man’s condition and feels, for a moment, maybe the needs of this man.
 - I can only imagine the weight of how sin has ravaged the human condition, that Jesus is beginning to feel the weight of His coming.
 - Paul says these words to the Galatians in Galatians 3:13:

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”—

Galatians 3:14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

- ○ This man was about to witness for himself, personally, the very demonstration of the One in whom had come to become a curse for him and others who would place their faith upon Him as Messiah.
 - The question becomes: “Will this experience lead to revelation for the man as to who Jesus is?”
- It would be in verse 34 and 35 that after Jesus’ touch and unique method of the use of saliva, that He utters the words: “Ephphatha (Eph-pha-tha), which means “Be Opened.”
 - Mark is quite helpful in his account as he has his audience in mind.
 - He makes sure he translates the phrase Jesus uses for his audience as the phrase used is Aramaic. So he includes the meaning.
- The text lets us know that the opening or the loosing of the tongue was an immediate response.
 - By the word of the Lord being spoken, by the power of the Spirit, what was once bound was now set free.
- Understand that the healing power of this miracle is not found in the words Jesus spoke, or in the touch of His hand, or even the spit from his mouth – the power was found in His very Person, who He was; The Messiah.

- It is Christ who came to bear our sins and our griefs upon Himself so that we would be free from the bondage of sin and death.
- In a way, the saliva that the man would have witnessed being placed on his tongue to set his speech free from bondage, would simply be a foretaste of the blood shed from Christ's body that would be the means by which men and women would be cleaned from sin through faith in Christ.
- We now arrive to our last two verses of the night. Verses 36 and 37.

Mark 7:36 And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it.

Mark 7:37 They were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

- Well, it is after this miraculous healing that Jesus orders the group of people who brought the man, not to say a word about what took place.
 - Now, at the first chance possible these men would have told everyone they came across what Jesus had done – it makes sense.
 - Yet, Jesus orders (commands in the Greek) these individuals not to say a word.
 - Now this is a bit of a different response from Jesus than what took place before.
 - Jesus told the man who had legions of demons possessing him at one point to go throughout the Decapolis and tell them about what was done.
 - Now it seems like the tone has changed and something else is happening here. Why is this the case?
 - We see this similar silencing of the Jewish leper regarding what miraculous thing Jesus had done in Mark 1:44-45.
 - This means of a "call for silence" was intended for a reason and that reason was to keep the main thing the main thing.
 - In other words, the purpose was for those who experienced what had happened to sit and think about what had happened.
 - Or recognize the reality that what just happened could only be accomplished by God coming to meet us here.
 - As I have said before, "Demonstration leads to Revelation".
 - It would be because of the Jewish leper who failed to listen to Jesus that there became a large inquiry regarding Jesus' ministry that was eventually leading to further escalation of His death – possibly pre-maturely.
 - The question that we must ask ourselves is: "Would this inquiry lead them to know who Jesus truly is as the Jewish Messiah who would come to make all things new (Messianic Kingdom) and provide salvation by means of faith in His Person and Work to those who believed, or would they simply see Him as an amazing miracle worker?"
 - May we not rush too quickly past this point and that is: Many people seek Jesus for what He can do for them rather than experiencing His goodness and responding to Him in obedience.

- Verse 36 mentions that there is a sense in which Jesus had repeatedly given the command of silence, yet the men continued in overwhelming awe telling those they knew.
 - The word “utterly astonished” in the Greek is the word *hyperperissos* (Hyper-per-issos). It means even beyond an extreme degree.
 - So the more that Jesus told them to tell no one, the more they proclaimed.
 - It's like the excited kid who tells their friends about the new toy they received but yet can't hear the parent's instruction upon their arrival to the birthday party.
- So where Jesus is trying to be discreet in His travels and further teach His disciples, through His compassion for others, it creates a new crowd of people who hear about Him and what He has done.
 - The work in which Jesus has performed for this one man in a private setting has now made its way to a whole new crowd of people.
 - What was intended to be a private blessing to this man has now become a public proclamation about a man named Jesus and what He could do.
- I find it quite telling of the wonders and great things in which Jesus was accomplishing in this region and how the parallel between Verse 37 and Isaiah 35:6 are so strong.
 - Check out Isaiah 35:6 as we close tonight:

**Isaiah 35:6 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.**

- Oh the joy in which these men experienced: To know that “He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”
 - This is only something in which Messiah could do.
 - This type of joy, this type of freedom, this type of healing, this type of power, is only something that comes from God.
 - The reality is that the same way in which these men were leaping and responding now was just how the very creation itself will respond in the consummation of the Messianic Kingdom on earth.
 - Much joy, much shouting, why because it will be Christ coming in His full Glory (at His Second Coming) having made a way for the lame and the lonely, the sick and the shut in, the lost and the weary.
 - And it will have been through the compassion of Christ in His first coming by way of the passion of Christ that those who trusted in Him by Faith will accompany Him in the Kingdom that is to come!
 - One question that would come about is: “If word traveled fast before about Jesus from one man encountering His compassion, how many more from this healing would come to inquire about Christ?”
 - In one way, Jesus' name and fame is increasing in the area, yet with that

comes further inquiry and persecution from the religious leaders.

- What was supposed to be a time of rest for Jesus and His disciples turned into more ministry.
- Well it would only be a matter of time now that shortly after this event, that Mark will lead the reader into the next revealing event – the feeding of the 4,000.
- Let's Pray.

Citations:

- Blunt, p.192
- John D. Grassmick, "[Mark,](#)" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 136.
- Gundry, 389, offers a full list of primary sources and modern discussion on the subject.
- R. T. France, [*The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2002), 303.