

Mark 7:31-37 Deaf and Speech Impaired

In Mark 7:31-37 we have the records of Jesus healing of a man who could not hear and could barely speak. Mark wrote in verse 32, **“There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk,”**

Mark’s description of him as deaf and with a speech impediment means that he was not born deaf but either because of sickness or an accident he was left deaf, presumably at an early age, so he had not really learned to talk. One born deaf has a whole other set of problems with speech.

Mark went on in that verse to tell us, **“they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.”** Touching one was associated with healing but it was also associated with blessing and from the surprise at the man’s healing it appears that all they really wanted from Jesus was His blessing. Assuming that was so, we need to remember that while God loves to bless us, He has so much more that He wants to offer us.

Mark went on in verse 33 to write, **“After he took him aside, away from the crowd.”** In taking him aside Jesus was minimizing their involvement in the miracle. His ministry had become an attraction that drew crowds but did little to get their attention on what He wanted to teach. After performing the miracle, verse 36 informs us that, **“Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone.”** Jesus did not want people to come merely to watch Him perform, but to listen to Him. He still desires that we listen to Him.

Jesus undoubtedly also took the man aside, so He could interact personally with Him. This was a habit of His. Jesus wants us to know that we are personally important to Him and not merely one of the crowd. He sees us individually and seeks to minister to our individual needs.

Mark went on to write about 5 things that Jesus did. Read Mark 7:33-34. Each of those actions is important and each step can be an example to us of how to reach a lost world with the Gospel.

Jesus began by **putting his fingers into the man’s ears.** That sounds strange until we remember that the man was deaf, so Jesus could not simply say to him, *“I’m going to heal you.”* The same is true when He **“spit and touched the man’s tongue.”** Those actions were signals or sign language that Jesus knew the man’s condition and was about to do something about it.

Jesus, being Jesus, knew what the issues were facing this individual. Often, we have no idea what people we want to share Jesus with are really struggling with. If we are going to reach them for Jesus, we need to find out.

Spitting probably seems strange but in Jesus’ day it was understood that there was healing in one’s saliva. Perhaps it was also a way for Jesus to say that He was giving of Himself. It was not long after that, that Jesus really gave of Himself on the Cross. The only way to reach the lost is to give of ourselves.

Next, Jesus “**looked up to heaven.**” Jesus didn’t have to do that to heal the man, but He knew that when the man saw that look upward he would understand that the healing that was about to take place was the work of God.

That upward look was a reminder of the importance of prayer. It is very easy to be so busy doing good and important things, like healing a man who was deaf and couldn’t talk right and forget the importance of prayer. Prayerlessness is not only the number one sin of the Christian, it is the number one reason we do not see more men and women, youth and children reached for Jesus. If we are not looking up to heaven we will not have any real ministry here on earth.

And Jesus gave “**a deep sigh.**” This was for Himself, not for the man who could not hear it. Mark wrote that Jesus gave, “**a deep sigh**” but did not tell us why. For the most part a sigh is either a sign of compassion or of disgust.

That Jesus truly hurts when we hurt is evident from the many interactions He had with individuals in Scripture. Continually we read that Jesus had compassion on individuals as well as mankind in general. Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He wept in compassion over the city of Jerusalem. Jesus reached out and touched the lepers, individuals who perhaps had not been touched by anyone other than another leper in years. Jesus understood and reached out in compassion.

We will not reach the lost until we truly understand the many consequences of sin, sin that cannot be forgiven until one asks Jesus to be saved. We must be aware of how much individuals lack without having Jesus in their lives.

That sigh of disgust was also for the hurts of humanity in general. Jesus knew what He and the Father had created and how, when creation was completed, it could be declared, “*It is good.*” There was no deafness or speech impairment until Satan entered and Adam and Eve sinned. A part of that sigh was disgust over the havoc sin has wrought. I wonder if maybe that sigh was not a longing for the time when He would make it all right again.

And Jesus “**said to him, “Ephphatha!” (which means “Be opened!”)**” Jesus used an Aramaic word that probably would not have been understood by the Greek readers of his Gospel, so Mark translated it. Mark probably translated it so his readers would also know that what Jesus said was no magical formula to use when one wanted a miracle. It was not an “*abracadabra*” for healing.

Read Mark 7:35. The moment Jesus spoke the word “be open” the man’s ears could hear again, and he could speak. The tense Mark used says he not only began to speak, he kept on speaking clearly.

Read Mark 7:36. Jesus said this before and He was never obeyed. It really is, or should be, hard not to share such a significant miracle in one's life. Jesus did not want it talked about at that point because He was attracting hundreds who only wanted to see Him perform a miracle.

Note that the man and his friends disobeyed Jesus. That had to have been frustrating for Jesus. He commanded the wind to stop blowing and it did. He commanded the waves to be calm and they were. He commanded disease to leave and it did. He commanded demons to leave and they did. He commanded man, and man did his own thing. Nothing has changed.

As another observation, that command was only for the time between His miracles and His resurrection. As soon as our salvation was purchased, and Jesus was resurrected His command is to tell everyone what we know. Unfortunately, as individuals in the New Testament could not help but share what they knew, men today refuse to share it. And the lost continue to die without Jesus.

Mark concluded his account of that event by noting that the people said, **“He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”** The interesting thing is that Mark used a unique word for **“mute to speak.”** He used a very rare Greek word that was used only once in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, in Isaiah 35:5-6. That passage spoke of the ministry the Messiah would have when He came. Read Isaiah 35:5-6 There can be no doubt that Mark saw in that a reference to Jesus as Messiah.

The miracle of restoring hearing and speech to a deaf man with a speech impediment speaks of God's concern for the ailments that we face because we live in sin cursed world. Perhaps deeper than that it reminds us God wants to open ears that are deaf to Him and give His people the opportunity to speak about what He means to them. Various times in Jesus' ministry He said, **“He who has an ear to hear let him hear.”** Certainly, that is what He wants for each of us and what He will help us have if we seek it. Having had our ears open to all He offers He will enable us to share His goodness with others. It is truly important that we learn to both hear Him and then share with others what He has said.