

The Miracles of Jesus
Miracle # 20

The Healing of the Deaf and Dumb Man

Mark 7:31-37

Matthew tells us that the multitude came bringing their sick to be healed – the blind, the lame, the maimed and many others (15:30). Out of the number of healings that Jesus does Mark selects one to relate in detail. Mark places this miracle immediately after the healing of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter.

"Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. (32) Then 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. (33) And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. (34) Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." (35) Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. (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." (NKJV)

The Background of the Miracle (vv. 31-32)

"Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. (32) Then 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."

Jesus now takes his disciples on a journey through the Decapolis district (a group of **ten** cities in what is now southern **Lebanon**), a journey that will take eight months to complete.

"They brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech"

As Jesus and his disciples make this journey they are faced with a man in bondage to a terrible physical handicap. This event is obviously very important because Mark is extremely detailed in describing the unique process of this man's healing.

Although this man is deaf he is not completely mute, he can make sounds but he is not easily understood. Evidently this man was not born deaf otherwise he would have been unable to speak at all.

This case differs from the dumb man mentioned in Matt 9:32, in that this man's condition is not linked to a **spiritual** source.

They begged Him to put His hand on him

This may simply be Mark's way of describing a request that Jesus heal their friend. But it is also possible that these words imply that they expected Jesus to heal this man **their** way. Sometimes when we come to the Lord with our prayers and requests, do we come with an expectation as to how those needs be met?

The Elements of the Miracles (vv. 33-34)

"And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. (34) Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."

Mark takes the time to tell us exactly what steps Jesus takes with this man. These should cause us to consider the questions, "**Why did follow these steps and why did Mark record them?**" Jesus' approach to the deaf man was a practical visual aid – everything he did spoke to one who could not hear.

The First Step, He took Him aside.

He first took this man aside from the multitude. What was the reason for taking this man apart from the crowd? Perhaps it was for privacy, or to keep from embarrassing the deaf man, but probably it was in to have this man's undivided attention, in order that he might awaken in him a confident hope that might be healed.

For our hearts the application is apparent. It is good for us from time to time to have time to be alone with God, away from the distractions of this life.

The Second Step, He Looked Toward Heaven

"Then, looking up to heaven..." (v. 34a)

First I want you to notice the upward look of Jesus that is so symbolic of his constant communion with the Father. This look was a visible indication of Jesus' life of prayerful communion and **dependence** upon the father. The upward look of Jesus was a sign to the deaf man of where the power to heal came from.

Prayerlessness has to be the fundamental sin of today's busy Christian. The prophet Samuel identified prayerlessness as a sin,

“Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:” (1 Samuel 12:23)

The Third Step, He sighed

In this encounter, Christ not only looked toward heaven, but he gave a deep sigh. What did this sigh indicate? It indicated a deep inward **compassion**. Jesus was filled with compassion for this man. **Ten** times in the New Testament we are told that Jesus was moved by his compassion for the needs of men. His heart was broken as he encountered hurting people. He ministered because he cared.

We need to care for many reasons. We need to care because others need our care. We need to care because caring is a repudiation of our selfishness.

“A little boy came home from school one looking rather sad. His mother said, “Was everything all right at school today?” He answered. “Billy told us that his daddy died. They buried him yesterday. Billy was crying - he was so sad about his dad dying.” His mother said, “Son, what did you do?” He said, “Mama, I put my head down on my desk and cried with him.” We need that same kind of compassion with those who are hurting around us!

The Fourth Step – He Touched Him

“put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue”

I don't believe that what the actions of Jesus are intended to be viewed as the **source** of the healing (miracle) but rather as a sign to the sufferer to awaken his faith; that a healing is to come. As this man could not hear, if he was to be encouraged at all, it would have to be by touch. Christ often touched those who are weak in faith in ways that strengthened the faith that they have.

True compassion not only feels it reaches out. As Jesus ministered to this man, He touched Him physically. He laid his hands on him and in the process let him know that he truly cared and that he desired to do something for him.

“In Stockholm, Sweden, a woman was injured as she rushed to catch a streetcar. She stumbled in front of the moving car and was caught beneath it. The police sent for a crane to lift the heavy streetcar off her body.

While waiting for the crane, a crowd of people gathered. One man pushed through the crowd, crawled beneath the car, and said to the woman, "Take my hand." As she took his hand she felt the nearness and

warmth of the stranger. This calmed her and prevented her from going into shock.

After the crane arrived and the woman was released, she said, "I never thought an outstretched hand could mean so much." Our outstretched hand can mean a lot to someone who is need..."

But I am talking about more than just physically touching people. If you want to help people you must make a connection! Involvement in the lives of lost people means we must be willing to get our hands dirty, because their lives may be a mess.

The surest way to harden your heart is to fail to do something when we feel the pull of compassion. Have you been willing to be uncomfortable to help someone? Do you ever run the risk of getting your hands dirty?

The Final Step - He Spoke To Him (7:34c)

"...and said to him, "Ephphatha," (ef'-ath-ah) that is, "Be opened."

Jesus had looked into heaven, He had exhaled a sigh of deep compassion. With his hands he had touched this man both **physically**, **emotionally** and **spiritually**.

And now he spoke, "**Ephphatha!**"

Mark was so taken by this moment that he records the very words Jesus spoke in the very language (**Aramaic**) that he spoke them. Those words contacted with this man and he heard and was healed. His tongue was loosed and he began to speak and keep on speaking (present tense).

The Effect of the Miracle (vv. 35-37)

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

His Ears were Opened and His Tongue Loosed

The healing took place **immediately** when Jesus pronounced the words `be opened."

He Commanded Them to Tell No One

Jesus commanded that those who witnessed the miracle to tell no one. But it seems that the more he insisted, the more they spread the story.

They were Astonished

The crowd exclaimed, "He had done all things well" the word "well" really means "**beautiful.**" Today we would have said, "**Everything he does is good.**"

In those words we are reminded of **Creation**, (Gen 1:31) "God saw everything he had made and indeed it was very good."

The miracles of Jesus were more than acts of compassion; they were **signs** which identified him to Israel as the **Messiah** predicted by the Old Testament Prophets. It seems all the more remarkable that the pagan Syro-Phoenician woman understood the meaning of his miracles, while his own people – for whom the miracles were intended – were merely astonished. It was if all they could say was "**Good job!**"

Conclusion

If we only emphasis prayer, we become guilty of super-spiritualization; if we only emphasize caring and compassion, we become guilty of sentimentalism. If we only emphasize the touch, then we become guilty of offering only a social gospel as the answer for man's needs. And if we only emphasize sharing the gospel, we become guilty of spiritualizing the gospel.

True ministry must begin in prayer, be motivated by compassion, require contact with people on a personal basis and involve challenging people with an exposure to God's word. Only that kind of ministry can be truly successful ministry. Only that kind of ministry can make lasting changes in the lives of people. That kind of ministry works because that is the kind of ministry modeled by Jesus.