



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V22 N40 October 18, 2020

KING JESUS

“When God Sighed”

Mark 7:31-37

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Jesus Christ

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners, and rose from the dead.

“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”

Hebrews 1:3



What makes for a “good” follower?

Miracles make up a large part of the Gospel of Mark. Some have calculated that as much as one third of Mark focuses on the miraculous. Jesus performed eighteen to twenty miracles in Mark. Matthew and Luke recorded additional miracle stories. The Gospel of John informs us that Jesus did so many outstanding and miraculous things that it is impossible to record them all (John 21:25). Two miracle stories in Mark are not found in the other Gospels: Jesus’ healing of the deaf (Mark 7:31-37) and his healing of the blind (Mark 8:22-26). Both healings involved intense focus from Jesus on these individuals with him touching the afflicted areas of these men. Jesus’ focused interaction and personal touch show his compassion. But more than just a display of compassion, the touch of Jesus upon the brokenness of people moves the reader to consider his or her own faulty condition. Jesus touching stopped ears and applying a salve to blind eyes forces us to ponder our own spiritual deafness and blindness. These miracles stir our need for Jesus to reverse our own spiritual silence and darkness.

The miraculous healing ministry of Jesus benefited many individuals. But the miracles of Jesus served the larger purpose of revealing his identity. The miracles of Jesus caused people to wonder at who he was. Matthew summarizes the miracle work of Jesus (Matthew 15:30-31) by stating that he healed four distinct types of individuals: blind, crippled, lame, and deaf/mute. Luke records a similar list of calamities (Luke 7:22). These categories of suffering are not original with the Gospel writers. The prophet Isaiah predicted that God would come to save his people and upon his arrival “then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for

joy” (Isaiah 35:5-6). Jesus healing a deaf and mute man is a direct fulfillment of the messianic prophecy of Isaiah.

Deafness and blindness may be considered the most extreme of these physical afflictions. The human body is at some level “self-healing” and miraculous healings could be seen as the rapid acceleration of natural processes. But damage to seeing or hearing is most often considered irreversible. There are no recorded miracles of healing of these two conditions by prophets in the Old Testament. God himself would need to show up to heal these extremely irreversible conditions. Jesus’ ability to perform healings of the blind and the deaf underscores his identity as the Son of God. Jesus heals the blind and the deaf. Jesus is doing what only God can do. Performing miracles for extreme cases was a sign of something extremely special.

The state of deafness in an oral culture was also excessively difficult. Blind, crippled and lame people could still communicate. Deaf people struggle to understand and to be understood, a double calamity. “Deafness does pose more serious problems than blindness in a non-literate society where the medium of communication is oral. Deaf people are, so to speak, alienated from their own society. They see a lot of things happening but do not understand what it is all about, since information does not reach them” (Catherine Owens, “‘Hear, O Israel’: Exegetical Blindness and Mark 7:31-37.” *Sewanee Theological Review*, vol. 56, no. 3, 252).

Jesus healing a deaf/mute man is not a casual event. For the deaf man, this was a reversal of momentous proportions. For those witnessing such a miracle, unbridled joy and endless proclamation erupted. Jesus opening the ears of the deaf profoundly demonstrated his divinity.



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

31 Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. 32 There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

33 After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. 34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!"). 35 At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

36 Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. 37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle all the geographic references in this passage.
- Underline each action that Jesus takes in this passage.
- Draw a line connecting the word "deaf" in Mark 7:32 with the corresponding word in Mark 7:37.
- Draw a line connecting the word "mute" in Mark 7:37 with the corresponding words in Mark 7:32.
- Draw a box around each word in the passage referring to the "people" concerned about the deaf man.
- Circle "At this" in Mark 7:35. Draw a line back to the action that caused the opening and loosening.
- Underline the word "it" in Mark 7:36. Draw a line to what "it" is referring to.
- Double underline the people's reaction in Mark 7:37.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What do the places mentioned Mark 7:31 share in common? What is Jesus doing traveling in these places?
2. People often brought other people to Jesus for miracles (Mark 1:32; 2:3; 5:23; 6:55-56; 7:26, 32; 8:22; 9:17; 10:13). What does this teach us about faith?
3. What extra challenges would a deaf and mute person have over a lame person or a blind person in Jesus' day?
4. Why do you think Jesus did the things he did with the deaf man (Mark 7:33)?
5. What was Jesus doing when he "looked up to heaven" and sighed greatly (Mark 7:34)?
6. Why does Mark supply an interpretation of the word Jesus uses in Mark 7:34?
7. Why does Jesus discourage publicity of this miracle (Mark 7:36)?
8. The people were excessively amazed at this miracle (Mark 7:37). Why were they more amazed here than at other miracles Jesus did?
9. To what do the statements from the people allude (Mark 7:37)?
10. How does deafness or hearing illustrate faith and discipleship (Mark 4:9, 12, 23; 6:11; 7:16; 8:18; 9:7)?

Commentary On The Text

Location, location, location – important words for realtors, business developers and readers of the Gospel Mark! Over 50 times in Mark, Jesus is described as moving from one location to another. In Mark 7-9, Jesus spends much of his time outside of Galilee proper and in the land of the Gentiles. After the Galilean mission of his disciples (Mark 6:6-13) and the report of John the Baptist's death at the hands of the Galilean Herod (Mark 6:16), Jesus left Galilee and headed to Lebanon and parts north and east of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 7:24,31). Perhaps he was seeking a place to rest or a place to escape the Herodian and Pharisaical forces increasing against him.

While in these Gentile areas, Jesus spent more time with his disciples, training and preparing them for ministry without his immediate presence. While more isolated from the crowds than in Galilee, Jesus was still interrupted by many Gentiles who wanted his blessings and intervention. Jesus embraced the people of these Gentile areas, preaching and performing miracles in their midst. Jesus' time in Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis showed his disciples that the Gospel was not exclusively Jewish. Many of the miracles and teachings Jesus shared with the Jewish Galileans, he repeated in these Gentile areas. Jesus talking to, touching, healing, feeding and eating with Gentiles stretched the boundaries and understanding of his Jewish disciples.

Returning to the Decapolis, Jesus encountered many who now were intrigued by him, a stark contrast to his first visit to the east side of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 5:17-20). People brought an extreme case to Jesus for healing. Many times, people are recorded bringing others to Jesus in the Gospels. Faith is an experience of the individual (Mark 9:24), but individuals rarely experience faith in isolation. To believe and follow Jesus includes inviting others to benefit from his blessings (Mark 5:19-20).

Mark described the deaf man as also one who "could hardly talk." This is a unique description found only here in the New Testament (see note on Mark 7:32). This man may have never learned to speak because of his deafness or he could have had something physically wrong with his tongue or vocal cords. In any case, this man was seriously disabled.

Jesus' entire interaction with this man is flooded with compassion. Jesus started by providing privacy to the man, by pulling him away from the crowd. A private consultation with the Great Physician would help an incommunicative man acutely understand the source of his individual healing. Jesus then touched the man exactly where "he hurt." Jesus touched the man's ears and tongue to lovingly direct the man's functioning but silent perceptions to his own needs and Jesus' agency. Some have said that by touching the man, Jesus used "sign language" to compassionately and tactilely communicate with one to whom words meant nothing.

After touching the afflicted areas of the deaf man, Jesus looked up to heaven. The deaf man would see this and learn that something from God was about to happen. Jesus then let out a "deep sigh." Though the deaf man could not hear such a sigh, he no doubt could read the face and lips of Jesus who "groaned" with empathy and concern for this suffering man.

Jesus then pronounced a single command (see note on Mark 7:34). Mark records this word in Aramaic and then translates it into Greek

for his readers. Aramaic was most likely the main language that Jesus spoke. Mark's mention of the Aramaic word supports the idea that this story was witnessed by the disciples and shared with Mark to translate into Greek for his readers. The fact that Mark translates the word indicates that Jesus was speaking a command rather than a magical spell.

The opening of a man's ears and the loosening of his tongue was immediate. The man would have instantly encountered his world in a drastically different manner. Today, when a hearing impaired person is first fitted with a cochlear implant, the reaction of the recipient to simple sounds is heart melting. No doubt this man was in shock at his new sense of hearing. His speech was immediately perfect as well. No small miracle for someone who perhaps never learned to speak a language or had long forgotten vocabulary and dialect.

Jesus attempted to curb the enthusiasm of the people who experienced the effects of this miracle, perhaps to keep the crowds from repeating the thronging restrictions that the Galilean crowds presented. They were overwhelmingly amazed. They could not help but "proclaim" or "preach" (see note on Mark 7:36) what Jesus had done. The distillation of their message (Mark 7:37) alluded to two Old Testament references. That Jesus had "done all things well" is an allusion to the creation narrative of Genesis 1 where the Creator is described as performing all things well (Genesis 1:31). Jesus, like the Creator is bringing the joy and beauty of life to those in need.

The second half of the crowd's message makes a direct connection to Isaiah 35 (see note on Mark 7:37). Jesus came to rescue, and a sign of his coming is to bring hearing to the deaf and speaking to those who cannot. Jesus' miracle benefited the severely isolated deaf man, but manifestly announced to both Jew and Gentile that God has come, in the form of his son, Jesus Christ to rescue those who believe in him.

As Jesus preached to both Jews and Gentiles, he often referred to faith as a matter of hearing. "He that has ears to hear, let him hear" – this phrase frequently prefaced and punctuated Jesus' sermons. No doubt the disciples were "all ears" at the healing of the deaf man. The healing of the blind man of Bethsaida would also be a lesson for the disciples. Both of these uniquely Markan miracles illustrate the relationship of hearing and seeing things spiritually with faith.

"This story also plays a role in Mark's larger context. We have noted several occasions where he has underscored the disciples' lack of understanding in the previous stories (e.g., 6:52; 7:18). This motif comes to a head in a conversation after the next Feeding when Jesus accuses them of having 'eyes' that do not see and 'ears' that do not hear (8:14-21). The healing of the blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26) – the second member along with this story of a probable traditional pair of miracles – follows this critique. At the same time, the crowd's acclamation in 7:37 in reference to the fulfillment of Isa 35:5-6 corresponds to Peter's subsequent confession at Caesarea Philippi in 8:27-30. Thus Jesus' role in healing the deaf-mute in the Decapolis and the blind man at Bethsaida has a deeper significance for his relation with the disciples and their seeing and hearing what he was revealing to them about God" (Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, Vol. 34A, Word Biblical Commentary, 391).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 31 *Decapolis*

"The text describes a round-about journey which takes Jesus first northwards from the district of Tyre to that of Sidon, then back south to the Lake of Galilee, 'in the middle of the region of Decapolis'. Since the Decapolis reached up to the lake only at its south-east quarter, a route from the region of Sidon to the lake in the region of the Decapolis would involve a considerable detour to the east and south. All of this route would be through non-Jewish territory, but there is no obvious reason why Jesus should go on such a long journey through this largely desert region in order to regain the lake" (R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC, 301-302).

v. 32 *could hardly talk*

"The description of the man with the speech impediment (NIV, "could hardly talk") uses a Greek word, *mogilalos*, that occurs only once elsewhere in the Bible. In the description of the revelation of the glory of the Lord to the nations in Isaiah 35 we read: "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped ... and the tongue of the dumb (*mogilalos*) shout for joy" (Isa 35:5-6). The presence of *mogilalos* in v. 32 links our story unmistakably to the Isaiah quotation....The allusion to Isaiah 35 is of supreme significance for Mark's presentation of Jesus, not only because the restoration of speech to a *mogilalos* signals the eschatological arrival of the Day of the Lord but also because the desert wastelands of *Lebanon* (Isa 35:2) will receive the joy of God. The regions of Tyre and Sidon are, of course, precisely the Lebanon of Isaiah 35. Jesus' healing of this particular *mogilalos* in the Decapolis becomes the firstfruit of the fulfillment of Isa 35:10, that Gentile Lebanon will join 'the ransomed of the LORD [and] enter Zion with singing! Salvation thus comes to the Gentile world in Jesus, who is God's eschatological redeemer from Zion" (James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, PNTC, 224-225).

v. 33 *spit and touched*

"In previous healings Jesus' touch has been described only in general terms. Here (and again in 8:23, 25) he touches specifically the affected organs, and in each case saliva is used (as it is also in Jn. 9:6). This would not have been as surprising in the ancient Mediterranean world as it is to us; there are several ancient accounts of the use of saliva especially in curing blindness. ...The famous story told by Tacitus (*Hist.* 4.81) of how a blind man in Alexandria was cured by the saliva of the emperor Vespasian (to Vespasian's own surprise) implies that it was not saliva as such, but specifically the emperor's saliva, which was effective. Similarly here it is *Jesus'* saliva which cures" (France, 303).

v. 34 *deep sigh*

"The 'sighing' of Jesus has been described as a standard magical healing technique, a

standard magical healing technique, a sigh of compassion for the man, a prayer-like gesture (cf. Exod. 2:24; 6:5; Judg. 2:18; also Tob. 3:1) seeking God's power for healing, and so on. In light of its association with 'having looked up into heaven', it is best to see Jesus's sighing as an emotional, prayer-like gesture (cf. 6:41, where 'looking up into heaven' is associated with "blessing" the bread; also John 11:41)" (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 360).

v. 34 *Ephphatha*

"Jesus [was] speaking Aramaic or Hebrew here, though the most widely shared view is that it is Aramaic. (The two languages are closely related and both were used by Jews in ancient Palestine.) It was a common feature among ancient magicians and exorcists to use incantations composed of foreign words or even nonsense syllables but, as if to distinguish Jesus from such practices, Mark translated the term so that its meaning as a simple command is known (cf. also 5:41; 15:34)" (Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark*, UBCS, 119-120).

v. 35 *loosened*

"An idiom indicating the restoration of speech ... the fact that he spoke 'correctly' or 'clearly' probably indicates that he had a speech impediment caused by the deafness, rather than that he was completely mute. In addition to Isa 35:5-6 (the main background passage), the healing also recalls Exod 4:10, where Moses complains to God that he cannot be God's mouthpiece to Pharaoh since he is not eloquent and is 'slow of speech and tongue.' The Lord responds, 'Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord?' (Exod. 4:11). By giving the man hearing and voice, Jesus acts with the authority of God" (Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ZECNT, 323).

v. 36 *not to tell*

"The command for secrecy following this healing recalls 1:44 and 5:43 (cf. also 8:26). We have also come across such commands for secrecy in several summary statements (1:34; 3:12). The command to silence, however, like Jesus' desire that his whereabouts not be known (7:24), cannot be kept. Jesus cannot be hidden. His words and works cannot be concealed. Mark does not portray 'them' or the leper in 1:45 as disobedient and insubordinate. On the contrary, the cleansed leper 'preaches' and disseminates 'the word,' and 'they preach'. These are both positive expressions in Mark" (Stein, 361-362).

v. 37 *overwhelmed*

"The people do not maintain silence, which is hardly surprising. People spoke about the miracle that had happened because *they were utterly astonished* (NASB), a natural and repeated reaction to Jesus' miracles (cf. 1:27-28; 2:12). The rare term *hyperperissōs* ('beyond all measure, utterly'), used only here in the New Testament, underscores the dramatic nature of the miracle" (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 178).

v. 37 *deaf hear . . . mute speak*

"Certainly an allusion to Isa. 35:5f., which celebrates God as the one who comes in order to unstop the ears of the deaf and to provide song for the man of inarticulate speech. The fulfillment of the prophecy was expected in the Days of the Messiah in the exegetical tradition of the rabbis. By means of the biblical allusion Mark provides his readers with a sign that the promised intervention of God took place in the ministry of Jesus" (William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, NICN, 268).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Spread the overwhelmingly amazing news! Jesus has come as the saving Son of God, performing prophesied healings of even extreme cases such as the deaf and mute.

Let your ears be opened to hear and believe this good news.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Do you confuse working with excellence and working with perfection? As parents, we can sometimes measure our child's excellence by performance – report card with straight A's, starting player on a team, or landing the lead role in a performance. I read a story recently about a family that paid their kids each time they scored a soccer goal. This was a lucrative system for one child who scored frequently. The other child played excellently, although rarely scored. He began to get down on himself and felt as if he was disappointing his parents. Finally, one day as they left the field after a team win in which this child played well, he told his parents he wanted to quit, that he'd never be good at soccer and would never earn any money for scoring goals. Needless to say, the family quit paying cash for goals and re-evaluated their reward system. During this season of virtual learning I've had to change my perspective and re-evaluate what academic excellence looks like for my children. I've had to remind myself that working with excellence may not be a high number grade. Instead, grasping a concept, practicing good time management and being a role model in the virtual classroom ranks considerably higher. Jesus does everything well. That doesn't mean He's the best at everything (which He is) but that He does them with a kingdom mindset. He pursues excellence in the name of the Lord. "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Col 3:17)

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 7:31-37.

1. Who did the people bring to Jesus and why?
2. Where did Jesus take the man?
3. How did Jesus heal the man?

What Do You Think?

Why would Jesus tell the people not to share this healing?

What Do You Do?

Go silent for one family meal. Have each family member use hand motions, notes, or scrabble tiles to communicate with each another. Was it frustrating to not be able to speak or hear others around you?

CORE COMPETENCY: Jesus Christ

I believe Jesus Christ is fully God/fully man and died for my sins.

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 147:5

Great is our Lord and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit.

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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