

Introduction to Mark 7:31-37

Sunday, June 19, 2016
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Jesus often surprises us. There are situations that arise in the Bible, and even in our lives, in which we think we know how Jesus will act or respond. It seems as though it is precisely in these moments when Jesus does something to catch us off guard. He reminds us that while He is like us, being fully human, we will never know Him exhaustively. There is no one like Him.

So it is with the story in Mark 7:31-37. While Jesus does something that may surprise us at first, He is also giving us a pattern for how we ought to do ministry. He demonstrates for us what it means to be mindful of those around us and how to minister to them in a way that points them to the love of God in Christ...

Context

Jesus has performed many healings in Mark's Gospel. To this point, He has even healed a Gentile in the region of the Decapolis (5:1-20). Yet there is something unique to this healing: Jesus *opens* the man's ears. This idea of "opening" ears, and tongue, and eyes, will become a prominent theme—especially as it pertains to opening the eyes and ears of those who are spiritually, deaf, mute, and blind.

Structure

- I. Jesus returns to Gentiles (31-32)
- II. Jesus heals a deaf and mute man (33-35)
- III. Gentiles react to Jesus (36-37)

Discuss

1. Jesus communicated to the deaf-mute man through touch, sight, and taste since those were the ways that he could understand. We can sense Jesus physically at the Communion table and through the love shared within the Body of Christ. Have you thought about that before? How does that impact the way you view the church?
2. Pastor Don mentioned that Jesus' sigh conveyed not only compassion, but also frustration because of what Sin has done in the world. What prohibits us from sharing his mixture of frustration with Sin and compassion towards sinners?
3. Who in your life needs to sense the love of Jesus? How can you go about communicating His love to that person or those people this week? It can be helpful to name someone in particular, so if is appropriate, feel free to name that person and talk through how you can show God's love to them this week.
4. Pastor Don also mentioned Jesus' habit of "looking up" or "gazing into Heaven" even as He went about His ministry. What disciplines can we cultivate in our lives that enable us to "look up" regularly as we pattern our lives and ministries after Jesus?
5. None of us is an island (totally self-sufficient) when it comes to spiritual disciplines. How can we go about encouraging one another and keeping one another accountable to spend time with Jesus?

Go Deeper (*This section is especially for leaders to consider as they prepare for the Growth Group meeting*)

Gospel Connections: A word from Jesus brings healing. Just like the deaf-mute man was enabled to hear physically, so Jesus is able to make us, who are spiritually deaf, hear for the very first time. He came to open the “eyes” and “ears” of every person who has been blinded or deafened by Satan’s lies. Yet, like the deaf-mute man, we too are utterly incapable of redeeming our own situations. We cannot heal ourselves of the spiritual deadness we experience apart from the work of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. In order to do this, Jesus became like us—flesh, blood, saliva, and all. He also left us the Communion table as a means to convey His grace in the gospel to our physical senses.

Whole Bible Connections: Isaiah 35 describes what life will be like when God returns to His people. The theme of that chapter is the joy and gladness that will be experienced by those who see the glory of the LORD. Verses 5-6 in particular offer a vivid description: “the eyes of the blind will be opened, *the ears of the deaf will be unstopped... and the mute tongue will shout for joy.*” In fact, the Greek word used for “mute” in Mark 7:32 is only found elsewhere in Scripture in the Greek translation of Isaiah 35. In this way, the God of Israel, has returned to earth in Jesus and has brought with Him the beginning of the end times. The curse is being undone through the ministry of Jesus. He is restoring what was lost as a result of sin.

Theological Connections: Jesus doesn’t create something new, he restores what was originally intended. Jesus simply restores the fullness of what it means to be human in him. And, like it was in the beginning, when He is finished it is said, “He has done everything well” (cf. Gen. 1:31). That ministry continues in the local church today as we are united to Christ and have been indwelt with the Holy Spirit. We may not have authority to heal people of physical maladies, but we do bear the gospel message which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is able to open spiritually blind eyes and deaf ears. We can also come alongside those who are hurting with a loving, purposeful touch that communicates God’s love.