

Sermon outline and notes:

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1/10/10

Mark 7:31-37 “He Has Done All Things Well”

Intro. Now I want you to look back at v.31. It tells of the completion of the Lord’s journey through southern Lebanon, where He had withdrawn to rest, & spend time with His disciples. Then, did you notice in our text that Jesus & His disciples came to “Decapolis”? That was a region of 10 cities, southeast of the Sea of Galilee, and east of the Jordan River. That area had a mix of Jew & Gentile population. He thus stayed out of the territory of Herod Antipas. Mark 5 records the fact that Jesus cast out a demon from a man in that area. After the loss of 2,000 pigs, the people there had asked Him to leave. Jesus did. But here we find that He is returning to this area. But this time, He was received much better by the people. Perhaps the converted demonized man had obeyed Jesus and told many about what God had done for him. Many people heard about Jesus and wanted to see Him. I believe they must have become excited when they heard that Jesus was back in the area.

Here is one point I want to make. Even though Jesus was rejected once, He returned. Aren’t you glad that Jesus gave them a 2nd chance? Aren’t you glad that Jesus gave you another chance, after you rejected Him the first time you heard the Gospel? I’m glad He is not like some of us. When we feel rejected, we tend to stay away.

Now there was one group of people who were especially excited to hear that Jesus was back. Those who were sick or disabled were glad to hear Jesus was in the area. So sure enough, one of the persons that was brought to Jesus was a man with *two* disabilities. And so the focus of my message will be on what Jesus can do to help those with special needs. Furthermore, we will be challenged by the example of Jesus to reach out to anyone who has need of the ministry of Jesus. I’m glad that our church has a ministry to those with special needs. We are following the example of Jesus.

So if we are going to follow the example of Jesus, let’s see first of all:

I. THE PEOPLE WHO NEED OUR MINISTRY

The man that was brought to Jesus is just one example of the many who needed His ministry then, and who need Jesus today. As we see in v.32, he suffered from a double disability. It is not unusual for a person who has a handicap to have more than one. So based on his example, the following people are among those who need the ministry of Jesus:

A. Those Who Are Deaf - The word (*kophos*) literally means “to blunt or to be dull.” He was dull of hearing. If he could hear at all you had to speak very loudly in his ear. The fact that he could speak to some degree makes it likely that at one time he could hear, but at some point in his life he could no longer hear.

There are deaf people in the community who need Jesus. I hope there is some church in the community that provides signing services for the deaf. I’m glad that those who are hard of hearing can hear the Word of God with the help of hearing aids.

We also need to reach:

B. Those Who Have Difficulty Speaking - V.32 also says that he “had an impediment in his speech.” The fact that he spoke with difficulty probably indicates that he stammered. About 1% of the population stutters. They live in fear of not being able to speak without getting hung up on a word. They go to restaurants and order what’s easiest to say, rather than what they’d like to eat. I had such a speech impediment, especially as a child and as a young person. I know what it’s like. A number in our Special Ed. ministry have difficulty speaking. And so we can identify with this man.

C. Those With Other Disabilities – Jesus ministered to people with other types of disabilities as well. For example, He helped the blind to see, and the lame to walk. As a result, such people were drawn to Jesus.

Handicapped people today are still drawn to Jesus, & we need to tell them about Jesus. If you have a disability, you should understand that Jesus will either heal your handicap in this life, or He will certainly heal it in the life to come. When you get to heaven, you won’t have that handicap anymore. And if He doesn’t heal your handicap in this life, He will give you grace and strength to help you live with your handicap, & do more than any doctor thought possible. Just put your faith in Jesus, and He will help you.

You know, the physical world was created in such a way that it illustrates spiritual reality. So there is another kind of handicap beside physical, mental, or emotional handicaps. Another group of people who need our ministry are:

D. Those Who Are Spiritually Handicapped - You may not be physically handicapped, but if you do not know Jesus as Savior, do you realize that you have a spiritual handicap? Let me show you. Romans 8:8 says, “So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” In other words, those who are unsaved, still dominated by their sin nature, cannot please God. I know what it’s like to have a speaking disability. No matter how hard I tried, I could not speak without stuttering. Likewise, many have a spiritual handicap that prevents them from being able to please God, no matter how hard they try. You see, until you are born again by the Spirit of God, you are spiritually handicapped. Try as you may, you cannot please God. That’s one reason why you cannot be good enough to earn your way to heaven.

By the way, a spiritual handicap is far more serious than a physical handicap. After all, handicapped people who know Jesus just have a temporary condition. In heaven the deaf will be able to hear just as well as anyone. Those who cannot walk here, will be able to walk, skip, and jump in heaven! But if you are spiritually handicapped, & if you never turn to Jesus for salvation, then your condition will never improve or change. Once you die, your condition were only become worse, not better.

So what about your own condition? Do you realize your own need? The first step in getting help is to acknowledge that you have a need, & come to Jesus.

So we see that there are many all about us who have needs. They have some physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual disability. And Jesus wants to meet the needs that people have. And He calls upon us to minister to needs. So let’s see next of all:

II. JESUS CAN CURE OUR DISABILITIES

So here was a man who was disabled in some ways, and as we shall see, Jesus ministered to him, and met his need. He did an amazing miracle & cured him of his disabilities. Now based on what we read here, I want to bring out the following principles of ministry to those who have hurts

and needs. First of all, since Jesus can cure disabilities:

A. We Should Bring Needy People to Jesus – Notice in v.32 that “they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech.” Obviously, they felt that Jesus could help him. That was really the first step toward a cure. Indeed, there was nothing better they could have done for this man than bring him to Jesus.

Did you know that most people come to Jesus because friends or family members bring them? Seventy-five percent of the people who come to Christ and get involved in the church are there because of family or friends. It’s very important that you invite people to church, & bring people to Jesus. We sing the song, “People Need the Lord,” and how true that is.

B. At Times We Need to Minister to People Privately – V. 33 says, “And He took him aside from the multitude....” Why didn’t Jesus heal him in the presence of the crowd? We are not told. But I will mention two of the most likely reasons: 1) The main reason is because of what we read in v.36, “Then He commanded them that they should tell no one.” Jesus did not seek a lot of publicity. He wanted to focus primarily on preaching and teaching, not healing. Furthermore, He did not want to create a premature crisis with the political or religious authorities. There is a second reason to withdraw from the crowd: 2) He probably did this so that the deaf stammerer would be able to concentrate all his attention on his Benefactor, and be free from distractions. It’s hard to minister to people when they are distracted.

Let me say something about that in church. God wants to work in the hearts of people, and yet some of you become a distraction. Don’t talk during the preaching or singing of God’s Word! You are keeping that person from hearing the Word of God. Don’t disturb the 8:30 service when you arrive for Sunday School. Don’t get up and walk out of the worship service unless it is absolutely necessary. If you know you are going to need to leave before the service is over, sit in the back. Don’t wear immodest clothes that are going to be a distraction. Turn off your pager & cell phone. And turn off those watch alarms, especially the ones that go off at 12 noon. I may not be through preaching by then! When you come to church, it’s time to focus your attention on God’s Word, and on worshipping God!

Furthermore, if you want to be less distracted during a worship service, where should you sit? Near the front! At times you need to get away from the crowd in the back so Jesus can minister to your heart better.

Furthermore, we see in our story another principle of ministry:

C. We Should Minister with a Touch of Love – As we see in v.33, Jesus touched this man. Jesus often touched people when He healed them. I assume Jesus put one finger in one ear and one finger in the other ear. He was preparing the man for what He was about to do. He couldn’t hear Jesus, but he could feel Jesus doing something to his ears. Jesus was telling this man by His actions, “Something will be done for your ears... and I will do it.” Then He spat, probably on His own finger, and with that wet finger He touched the man’s tongue. Here again, the meaning was, “Something is about to be done for your tongue and speech... and I will do it.” By the way, don’t freak out because of what Jesus did here, especially if you let your dog lick you in the mouth! A healthy person’s saliva is not likely to transmit any sickness, and saliva actually contains antibodies. I’m sure the small amount of saliva that Jesus put on this man’s tongue caused no harm.

Jesus did not need to touch him in order to heal. It was probably an aid to his faith, and an expression of the fact that He cared for this man. Also, since he was deaf, it wasn’t enough for

Jesus just to speak, for he couldn't hear Jesus. Jesus met this man's unique need by His unique way. Oh, the touch of Jesus! Jesus came right down to where that man was, and touched him at the point of his need. That is what the Gospel is all about. We could not go up to God, so God came down to us in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. God reached down and touched us. And God is still reaching out to people through His church.

If you want to help people, you need to get in touch with people in need, so to speak. We need to give people a warm handshake, and helping hand, or a hug if appropriate. Science has proven the physical & psychological benefit of loving touches between people. Researchers discovered that when a person is touched, the amount of hemoglobin in their blood increases significantly.¹ But too often we separate ourselves from unsaved people, and we even avoid people in their need. We huddle in our church buildings, and have little social contact with non-Christians. Now the Bible does teach separation from the *sins* of the world, but it does not teach separation from the *people* of this world. Are you getting in touch with lost people who need the Lord?

D. We Should Look to Heaven as We Minister – Notice in v.34 that Jesus looked up to heaven. What do you think Jesus was doing? I believe He was praying, indicating that His help came from above. Jesus often did that. In the case of Lazarus, He first looked up to heaven and prayed before raising Lazarus from the dead. That is the source of power.

Even so, if you are really going to help people, you need to have time each day praying to God. If Christ looked heavenward, how much more should we! So let's not minister to others merely in the strength of our flesh. Let's minister to others in the power of the Lord. And such power comes through prayer. So I must pray before I preach. Teacher, pray before you teach. Singer, pray before you sing. Outreach visitor, pray before you visit. And as you minister to people, pray with them.

E. We Should Minister with Sympathy – Notice in v.34 that Jesus groaned or sighed (*stenazo*) here. It showed that He was taking the man's condition to heart. He saw what he'd been through, the years of frustration with his disability, and the years of ridicule and laughter from uncaring people. This was our Lord's compassionate response to the pain and sorrow sin has brought into the world. The sorrows of this man were His sorrows. Jesus was a "man of sorrows," partly because He sympathized with the hurts of humanity. Here was standing before him just one of a multitude of hurting people. Jesus knew full well that though He would heal this one man, there would be thousands of others who would continue in their affliction.

Are you going through a valley, a heartache, frustration or pain? Jesus doesn't just sit up there somewhere in heaven saying, "Well, I hope you make it." Jesus feels. He felt for that man. He groaned within His spirit. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses...." Then the next verse says, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

So by His example, Jesus teaches us to sympathize with people who are hurting. We are to minister to people with compassion. Tell me the depth of a Christian man's compassion, and I will tell you the measure of this fruitfulness. Pity is meant to impel to help. But one of the worst things that can happen to a Christian worker is to become cold and indifferent toward those who are lost and hurting. If your heart has become indifferent to the hurts of others, do you know what the cure is? It is to do what Jesus did. Did you notice that this sigh followed His look up to heaven? The more you look to the blessedness of God, the more you sense by way of contrast the woes of earth.

¹ Helen Colton, *The Joy of Touching*.

There was a man in New York City who ran a rescue mission. One day someone saw him leaning against a building with tears running down his eyes. He was praying, “Oh God, the sin of this city is causing so much pain and suffering.” Clearly his compassion for others motivated him to work in that rescue mission. Have you ever taken the time to go to some of the areas of the Tri-Cities, where there is so much suffering? Are you cold and indifferent to the suffering of humanity?

One day a boy came home from school, and had a sad look on his face. His mother asked what was wrong. The boy said, “Billy came to school and announced that his daddy had died. He was crying, and so sad.” The mother asked, “Well, what did you do?” He said, “Well, I just put my head on my desk and cried with him.” That’s good. Romans 12:15 says, “...weep with those who weep.” Oh God, give us compassion for people.

F. We Should Minister the Word of God – Jesus spoke the Word of God in the form of a command here. He said “Ephphatha!” Aramaic was the Master’s mother tongue. So for his non-Jewish readers, Mark translates the term, informing them that this means, “Be opened.”

Now notice what happened as told in v. 35, “Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly.”² What a miracle took place! Every non-working part of his ear was healed or recreated so that he could hear once again. The defective part of the brain or mouth that controlled his speech was healed, so he could speak freely. Can you imagine how excited this man was when he realized that he could hear & speak! I’m sure he wanted to shout the praises of Jesus!

Oh, the power of the word of Jesus. We know from John 1, Col. 1, and Hebrews 1 that God the Father created the world through the agency of God the Son, Jesus Christ. He just spoke the Word, and stars & planets were flung into space, & into their own orbit. And so Jesus only had to speak the Word, and the little defective parts of the ear were recreated good as new. His tongue was loosed, and he could speak as well as anyone [or name someone with a reputation of speaking well].

We do not speak the word with power in the same way Jesus did, but we do have the Word of God in our possession, do we not? We can share the Word of God with people, and lives will be changed by the power of that Word. Romans 1:16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes....” Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, ... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Lives have been dramatically changed through the power of God’s Word. The power of Jesus should encourage every Christian worker. Christ can empower the worker, and Christ can change the lives of those that we minister to.

So we see that it is not enough to minister to people with good deeds & touches of love & compassion. We also need to share the Gospel with those who need salvation. We need to share the Word of God with those who need comfort or encouragement or hope, or who need to renew their walk with God. Learn the Word of God so you can share it with others.

Now when we follow the example of Jesus and minister in His name, notice last of all:

III. THE REACTIONS WE SHOULD GIVE

How should we respond when we or others receiving the healing or saving touch of Jesus?
First of all:

² “Spoke” is an inchoative imperfect, “he began to speak...” (Robertson). The recounting of these various vivid details shows that the story of an eyewitness (probably Peter) is being transmitted here by Mark.

A. We Should Respond with Obedience – V.36 says, “Then He commanded them that they should tell no one...” This man & the friends or family who brought him were commanded to tell no one. Jesus had His reasons, as we have already discussed. In gratitude for what Jesus had done for this man, they should have obeyed the explicit command of Jesus. But notice what they did, “but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it.” There is something in our sinful human nature that causes us to want to do just the opposite of what we are commanded to do. Have you noticed that?

A sign says, “Do not touch,” and for some reason, what want to do just the opposite. This reminds one of the mother who knew that the only way she could get Johnnie to run an errand was to say to him, “Don’t you dare go to the store and get me five pounds of sugar!” Even so, Jesus said, “Don’t you tell any man,” and they told every man. Instead of responding with obedience, they responded with disobedience.

Are you living in obedience to the One who saved you, and has done so much for you? Jesus said in John 14:15, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

B. We Should Respond with Praise – This should be our ultimate goal. So let’s focus on the words of praise found in v.37, “He has done all things well.” The perfect tense shows the settled convictions of these people about Jesus. I want you to underline that in your Bible and remember that. Isn’t that so true? Isn’t that praise worthy of the Master. As these people saw Jesus and got to know Jesus, that was their conclusion.

Down through the centuries many have given the same testimony concerning the work of Jesus in their own lives. I came to Him for forgiveness a long time ago, and He forgave my sins & gave peace to my heart. He changed my life. He helped me overcome a speech impediment, and He helps me to preach His Word. He has helped me through many problems & trials in life. Indeed, I have personally experienced the truth that He does all things well. So this should give us confidence concerning the future. If He has done all things well in the past, then surely He will do all things well in the future.

Won’t you trust Jesus to do all things well? You may say, “I am burdened with guilt. Will Jesus forgive me of all of my sin?” Sure He can, for “He has done all things well.” I and many others here today can testify to the fact that Jesus saves souls quite well. Do you think Jesus can help me overcome that bad habit and be the person I ought to be? Sure He can, for He has done all things well.” Can Jesus save me today and forever? Yes, for the Bible says, “Wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost, them that come to God by Him” (Heb. 7:25). He does all things well, for He is a great and wonderful Savior. What He has done for others, He’ll do for you. When you get to heaven, and look back on your life, you will see how Jesus has done all things well, on your behalf. The mysteries of life will be understood. And when it seemed that God was dealing with you so severely, you will see that He was doing it for your own good.

Now we need to have both responses to Jesus. We need to praise Jesus, and we need to obey Jesus. What is amazing is that some of the people who disobeyed Jesus were the same people who said in v.37, “He has done all things well.” They were singing His praises so to speak. This is what happens every Sunday. Many gather in church to sing the praises of Jesus, and they go out and disobey Him. Praise is no substitute for obedience. In fact, there are many Christ-admirers that are lost. The true mark of discipleship is revealed in John 15:14, “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” Furthermore, Jesus said in John 8:31, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.” True discipleship is learning the Word of God, and then obeying God’s Word. So

let's respond to the work of God in our lives not only with praise, but also with obedience.

Conclusion: All of us have needs. You may have a physical need, an emotional need, or a spiritual need. You may have many needs. Turn to Jesus. He can meet the needs of your life. He does all things well.

You probably know of someone who has a need right now. Reach out to them. Show them you care with a touch of love. Pray for them. Tell them of Jesus. Bring them to Jesus.

Now if Jesus has touched your life, you need to praise Him, but you also need to obey Him. Have you obeyed His command to make a public profession of faith? Have you been baptized. Have you joined a local church? If not, it is time to obey Jesus. He will be praised & gloried through your public decision. Obey Jesus today!

Sources: William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975); Dr. Jim Henry (notes from his sermon on Mark 7:24-37); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); A.T. Robertson, *New Testament Word Pictures*, Vol. IV (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931, accessed through Online Bible); J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), *Mark: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993); Jerry Vines (notes from tape of his sermon dated 10/16/83); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

This incident is only reported in Mark.

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