

Ephphatha

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[0 : 00] So let us turn to the Gospel according to Mark and chapter 7, where we have read. And with the Lord's help and direction, let us consider the verses beginning at verse 31.

Jesus healing the deaf man. Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee in the region of the Decapolis.

And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment. And they begged him to lay his hand on him. And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears and after spitting touched his tongue.

And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, Ephatha, that is, be opened. And his ears were opened.

His tongue was released. And he spoke plainly. One or two words on this miracle.

[1 : 19] Earlier in the chapter, we have seen the Lord's dealing with the Pharisees, who laid so much of an emphasis on outward issues, like the washing of hands and so on.

Not at all being aware of the uncleanness that lay within their own hearts, uncleanness of various kinds, as the Lord here enumerates.

He says from verse 21, still referring to the Pharisees and their worldview, from within, the Lord says, out of the heart of man come evil thoughts, and so on.

These are the things that defile oppression. And that's a lesson, I think, that we always need to keep remembering and reminding ourselves of, how impure our life is made by these sins of thought, these sins that nobody sees.

Nevertheless, it renders our heart and soul and life far from what our life ought to be. And then the Lord goes to another area, to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

[2 : 43] And there he meets up with a woman who was a Syro-Phoenician woman, who had great faith, despite the fact that Jesus said that it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

She answered him, Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. It's as if she was equating herself with the unworthy picture the dog presents.

The dog is there and waiting for any scrap that falls off the table. And this is the way she sees herself. Unworthy as she is, nevertheless, she has come to the Lord and pleaded with him, knowing that the Lord is able to help her and she wouldn't be turned away, despite the fact that even the disciples in one of the other Gospels tried to turn her away.

But no, she continued praying and pleading with the Lord. And for that statement, he says in verse 29, verse 29, You may go your way.

The demon has left your daughter and she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone. An amazing account that is.

[4 : 06] And then it comes to this particular miracle the Lord performed on this man. And it says that the Lord returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee in the region of the Decapolis.

I measured this and if my measurement was right, I think it's a distance of maybe 80 miles. The Lord going all the way around Tyre and Sidon and then coming this way down towards the southeast and east of the Sea of Galilee where the Decapolis, these ten Gentile cities were and obviously the Lord had business to perform there.

You often see the Lord's dealing with people and things with such a minute timekeeping as it were. He met the woman of Samaria sitting at the well of Sychar there at noon.

And nobody was coming to the well because it was the height of the heat of the day. And this woman came seemingly a chance happening that she was there at the same time as the Lord but

from the Lord's point of view it was an eternal appointment that he was keeping. And it's the same with this man here. The Lord came to the east of the Sea of Galilee because he had business to conduct with this particular man. And it's wonderful the way the Lord in his providence brings us face to face with texts of Scripture or people through whom we receive comfort and help and encouragement.

[6 : 00] The Lord's split second timing is always there. And he knows how to appoint our providence so that we can share his blessing in his own appointed way and his own appointed time.

Well this man then who was deaf and who had a speech impediment. There are four things I'd like to highlight. First of all this man's dilemma.

He was deaf and he couldn't speak well. Not clear whether he had been deaf from birth or not. In any case he had this terrible dilemma physically.

But I think it's fair of us to see it as a representation of an even deeper dilemma. that it was a spiritual dilemma from the point of view that he wasn't able to hear spiritually and he wasn't able to speak in a spiritual way.

It's as if the particular blessing this man receives highlights the kind of blessing that comes our way through the work of the Holy Spirit giving us spiritual hearing and a spiritual voice.

[7 : 25] So that was his dilemma. First and foremost his physical dilemma. But secondly the people's concern as they saw and met up with this man day by day.

It says here that verse 32 they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment and they begged him to lay his hand on him.

The particular part the people of the Decapolis played in this marvelous miracle of the man receiving his hearing and his speech.

Thirdly we see the Lord's gracious power demonstrated in verse 33 onwards taking the man aside from the crowd privately the Lord put his fingers into his ears and after spitting touched his tongue looking up to heaven he sighed and said to him a fatha that is be opened and his ears were opened and he spoke plainly.

And just finally if we have time the people's response at the end of the chapter verse 37 the people were astonished beyond measure saying he has done all things well he even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak and this is still the case with our Lord Jesus he always does all things well however many problems we may encounter in our providence however many questions we may have why am I like this how are things so long like this feeling as it were that I am uphill climbing and the wind against me and the tide running against me why am I like this well always be assured that the Lord is the author of your providence and he always does all things well and we have to wait for his time firstly then this man's dilemma and the Lord had come a long way to meet up with him and the dilemma really was a very awkward one

[9 : 50] I had an uncle and he was deaf from the age of 15 he learned to lip read very successfully but it was always a kind of a challenge when you had to explain something to him that was sort of outside of his comfort zone and this man would encounter an awful lot of difficulties also from day to day dealing with people probably people outside of his own home and family circle he really was experiencing a lot of difficulty but as I suggested at the beginning it's an indication and a pointer to a far deeper problem and that far deeper problem is the problem of spiritual deafness and there are so many people throughout our communities maybe in our homes who have this real problem sin has caused them to be unresponsive to what the word of

God is saying think of what the word of God is saying think for example of what the law of God is saying and this man looking from a spiritual perspective wasn't able to hear what the law of God was saying what does the law of God say to us and to us all love the Lord your God with all your heart all your soul all your strength all your mind and your neighbor as yourself we cannot hear that in a spiritual language if we are spiritually deaf we're not aware of the standards that God has laid before us we can't read them but it's as if it doesn't impact our heart and our life at all what does the Lord again say be ye holy for I am holy and what does he say in the scripture every sin deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life and the life that is to come and look around our villages and our communities and there are so many people although they may have heard these scriptures repeatedly over the years nevertheless they haven't impacted them they haven't gone all the way through into their hearts and they're not really bothered whether they love God or not they're not really bothered as to the sin of their lives or they try and keep the out aspect of their lives tidy and clean and free from offence but the heart is still hard and unrepentant because they cannot hear the

tolling of God's law the soul that sins shall die we cannot hear it by nature and then on the other hand we cannot hear the gospel we cannot hear the invitations of Christ it's as if it's somebody else speaking and it's for somebody else but really it doesn't take anything to do with me because

I'm not tuned into the wavelength of his spiritual invitations and directions when he says this is the way walk you in it well I'm not hearing that I walk my own way when he says come unto me and be he saved well I'm fine the way I am it's as if this hard of hearing this deafness is something that is so common among our people but you see the people in the Decapolis they realized that this man at a physical level was needing some help and they heard that Jesus was coming and they came and brought this man to him now isn't it interesting that in chapter 5 we have an account of a man from this very area the man who had the legion of devils and he was healed by the Lord the Lord cast out the devils from him and you remember the devils went into the swine and the swine ran down the steep place into the sea and they were drowned and this man was blessed in his soul and he felt so thankful to the Lord Jesus and he said I want to be with you wherever you go and Jesus said no you go back to your own people and tell them the great things the Lord has done for you and that he has saved you that's in chapter 5 of Mark and I don't know but I have a feeling that that man who had the legion had something to do with this man's healing that he knew what the Lord Jesus could do and when he heard that Jesus was in the community he brought this man maybe in the company of others he brought him to Jesus this man was brought to the [15:40] Lord still deaf still having an impediment in his speech needing to be healed and I noticed the two brothers who were praying this evening that you had this theme in your prayer that you feel that there is a need to go out among the people and to bring people under the sound of the gospel and that's exactly what these people did it is something that we all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious must do and need to do and encourage one another to do what are the ways of doing what these people in the Decapolis did with this man who was deaf and who had the speech impediment well they physically brought him to the

Lord Jesus they couldn't help him but they brought him and that's one thing that we would seek to do with our fellow sinners in our communities come alongside them speak to them point them to the Lord and if they're of a mind to accompany you to the services that's even better that is one level of doing what these people did with this man but there is another level which is a more important level I think and that is along with every human contact you have with people who need the Lord's blessing in their lives that you come to the Lord yourself on their behalf that you pray fervently for them I don't know how you're going to do it maybe you start with your own family start with yourself start with your own family and those around you in the houses nearest to you and extend the area of your circle of prayer day by day and week by week ask the Lord to give you that persevering prayer on behalf of those who are still deaf who cannot hear his voice and who are blind and cannot see his beauty nor can they see their own need of him and it says here in verse 32 they begged him to lay his hand upon him that's pleading with him not just a light light throwing off as it were of a request in the presence of the Lord to satisfy your conscience that's not what it's about this is a full commitment to our prayer to beg the Lord and say like Jacob said with the angel who wrestled with him at Peniel I will not let you go until you bless me they begged him and then

Jesus in verse 33 takes the man aside from the crowd isn't that an amazing thing when you think of your own spiritual experience I'm sure some of us can think of a time when we were in a service and maybe the church was full or plenty people there and you felt that you were being addressed as if there was nobody else there but yourself the Lord was taking you aside the Lord was dealing with you personally and that's what we have here he takes this man aside from the crowd privately because every blessing that the Lord bestows upon his people it's a personal blessing oh many people can be blessed together but every one of them is blessed individually and this man had this wonderful privilege of the

Lord Jesus taking him aside from the crowd privately the blessing the blessing of God sets us it sanctifies us takes us away from the lifestyle that we had and gives us a new way and a new lifestyle because we are born again this man was taken aside from the crowd privately then what did the Lord do well he demonstrated his grace and his power to heal first of all it says here he put his fingers into the man's ears it's as if he's saying this is part of your problem and I'm going to deal with it maybe when you were first converted there was a particular sin that dominated your life and

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[21 : 20] Lord's power was addressed to you at that very point and you knew that it was only the Lord's power that could deal with that particular sin and that particular way of life this man felt the Lord's hands in his ears and then after spitting the Lord touched his tongue it's as if he is saying these are the two problem areas first and foremost that you need to have dealt with and the Lord looked up to heaven it's as if he is saying this is where your help can come from and only from here you need a heavenly physician you need power from above that's what the Lord says to Nicodemus in John chapter 3 except a man be born from above as we have it in the in the authorized version born again but it can also mean born from above it is a heavenly power transforming power and

Jesus as it were directed this man's eyes upwards this is where the power comes from and only from here and then what does he say he said to the man if you can think of this the man's eyes could read the lettering of the word as Jesus spoke it he knew what the Lord said he knew what the Lord said because he could read his lips with that particular word be opened the Lord's command ears be opened tongue be loosed and it says then his ears were opened and his tongue was released you see it is the

Lord's gracious power in action that we see here and this man he he saw the words spoken by the Savior and he responded to the power the Savior exercised in opening his ears and in releasing his tongue he spoke plainly he hadn't been able to speak the language of Canaan up until now but he was now able to speak at that spiritual level he had a story to tell just as you have a story to tell if your eyes have been opened if your ears have been opened if your tongue has been released you have something to tell the psalmist says come and I'll tell what the Lord has done for my soul I was in a slimy pit and in the miry clay and the Lord lifted me out of that situation and he put my feet upon the rock and I knew a song in my mouth to magnify the Lord this man started magnifying the Lord with his mouth with his lips the same as you you have a spiritual experience to relate to people you can tell them the way you were and the kind of lifestyle you lived but the Lord then came into your life and you're able to describe the different kind of direction your life has taken through the blessing of God upon you you know rejoice in God your Savior and you have a prayer maybe that's the first utterance that this man had a real prayer oh we can have many words as we say that we pray the Pharisees had long prayers very elaborate prayers but they really weren't praying at all when the real prayer begins it begins as a result of the

Holy Spirit teaching us our need and teaching us the language of dependence and the language of faith and the language that the Lord understands coming from a broken heart and coming from a soul with godly sorrow the thief on the cross he prayed in the closing hours of his life wasn't a very long prayer but I think it was a very deep prayer because he had lived a life that was pretty reckless but the Lord had snatched him as a brand from the burning and he opened his mouth and gave him to pray Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom why should he remember him why should the Lord remember any of us well because he has chosen his people from all eternity and in his own good time he brings them to a knowledge of themselves as needy and a knowledge of himself as a gracious and mighty savior this man he spoke plainly if you were in his company shortly after this

[27 : 40] I'm sure he could hardly stop speaking of the difference that he now feels in his life he hears new things he hears what the gospel says come unto me as I mentioned already the Lord Jesus promises I will never leave you I will never forsake you the Lord Jesus says of himself all power or authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth why then shall we not go out and tell all nations and all people what the Lord is able to do and Jesus charged them to tell no one but the more he charged them the more zealously they proclaimed it well Jesus had a reason for charging them not to tell because many of the people thought that he was to be king and that they should get him to be king over them but that wasn't his mission not an earthly king his mission was to establish his own heavenly kingdom the kingdom of God is among you he says and he didn't want to be in any way associated with an earthly kingdom from that point of view but the people couldn't hold back because they were so impressed and they said he has done all things well he opens the deaf ears and looses the tongues that weren't able to speak is his power in any way limited today it's not limited at all he is still the same saviour mighty to save he is still the same saviour mighty to keep those whom he saves he is the same saviour who has promised that he will bring all of his people home to be with himself and he is going to present them faultless before himself in glory isn't this a saviour to be commended to our communities a saviour to be commended to those with whom we

work why should we be silent when such a saviour is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto

God by him surely this is what we have here an illustration I believe of what the Lord can do spiritually but he leaves a responsibility with every one of ourselves to beg him in prayer to lay his hand on people round about us that more and more people would be saved we are all sinners but he is a mighty saviour come to him this evening hasn't he given us direction and encouragement to pray he says ask seek and it shall be given to you seek and you shall find knock and the door shall be opened and he goes on to say in one of the gospels if you who are sinful or evil are able to give good gifts unto your children how much more will your heavenly father give the holy spirit to those who ask friends let us resolve by grace to beg your lord to pour his blessing out upon us as communities as an island as a nation as a world because without him we can do nothing but through him we are able to do all things let us pray