

The Voice in a Silent World

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Preacher: Rev Donald A MacDonald

[0 : 00] Let us now read from the New Testament, from the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 7, and reading at verse 24.

Mark, chapter 7, and verse 24. And from thence he arose and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, entered into an house and would have no man know it, but he could not be hid.

For a certain woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by nation, and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled, for it is not meat to take the children's bread and to cast it unto the dogs.

And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord, yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And he said unto her, For this thing go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

[1 : 20] And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out and her daughter laid upon the bed. And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

And they bring unto him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. And they beseech him to put his hand upon him. They took him aside from the multitude and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit and touched his tongue.

And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said unto him, A father, that is, be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

And he charged them that they should tell no man. But the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it, And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well.

He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak. Amen. And may God bless to us that reading from his truth.

[2 : 42] Let us further sing to his praise in the first version of Psalm 136. The first version of Psalm 136.

Give thanks to God.

Let us sing to God.

God bless you. For goodness me. For mercy, happy ever.

Thanks to the Lord of God. Give me for his experience.

[4 : 17] For mercy, happy ever. Thanks to the Lord of God. Thanks to the Lord of God.

For mercy, happy ever. Who all his wonders did come to, for his grace failed us never.

Who by his wisdom began time, for may she have the ever.

Who stretched the air above the sea, for his grace failed us never.

Let us turn to the passage that we read.

[5 : 43] And we may read again at verse 31. The Gospel according to Mark chapter 7 and at verse 31.

And again departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

In John's Gospel we are told that a particular hour had been determined for Christ to depart the world.

Several times in John's Gospel you will find the statement, Made by Christ my hour has not yet come.

[6 : 58] The fact that his hour was not yet come, I believe accounts for the information that is given to us by Mark, that Christ had gone into the region of Tyre and Sidon.

Mark alone tells us that Jesus wished this visit to remain secret.

From thence he arose and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, entered into a house, and would have no man know it.

And then Mark goes on to tell us that his presence did not remain a secret, but he could not be hid.

And then he tells us how the Syrophoenician woman, who came to Jesus with a very real and genuine concern, regarding her daughter who had an unclean spirit.

[8 : 07] And it is after dealing with this woman's anxiety and her request to have her daughter healed, that we find Mark relating about a healing miracle performed by Jesus on a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment.

Where Christ performed this miracle creates the impression that he was still avoiding centers of population, where he might meet with the opposition of Jewish leaders and the desire of Herod to have him done away with.

In my own mind, I get the impression that this was an area which had a percentage of a Gentile population.

And the reason that I say that is based on what I read in Matthew's Gospel account of this healing miracle, where you find this written, so that the crowd wondered when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing.

And then these words, And they glorified the God of Israel. They glorified the God of Israel. That is the key phrase that indicates that it wasn't just all Jews who were in that area, because they did not glorify their pagan gods and idols, but the God of Israel, who had sent Messiah into the world.

[9 : 53] Well, three thoughts today from our text. First of all, the man brought to Christ. Secondly, the miracle performed by Christ.

And thirdly, the momentous impact that had on the spectators. First, the man brought to Christ.

We are not given his name. It's an unnamed man brought by some unnamed people to Christ. And the needs of this man are described for us by Mark in these words, a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment.

Mark does not provide us with great biographical detail about the man. For example, he doesn't tell us if this man had been deaf from birth, or had something happened to him at some stage in life to cause his deafness.

If he was deaf from birth, he never heard his parents' voices. He never heard the song of birds. He never heard the voices of children at play.

[11 : 12] He never heard the voices of his fellow men. Or the sound of music. Not any other sounds. He was locked into a silent world without noise.

Now it may be that times in your own life, when you wished you were deaf, that you didn't hear certain things that may have impinged on your comfort zone.

things that may have distressed you. But I think that anyone who suffers from real deafness will say to those who may wish selective deafness, do not complain of enjoying the power of hearing.

Not only was this man deaf, but he had a speech impediment. It appears that Mark is suggesting a link between the man's deafness and his speech impediment.

People who suffer from acute deafness, like this man, cannot hear themselves speak.

[12 : 33] And that in turn has a knock-on effect, in that it affects the way in which a profoundly deaf person speaks.

Is that why Mark tells us that this man had a speech impediment? I'm not sure. I knew a man who was profoundly deaf.

He had lost the ability to hear because of an accident when he was about 13 or 14 years of age. And his manner of speaking was slightly unusual in that he could not hear himself speak.

Yet he could maintain a conversation, especially with members of the family to which he belonged, because he had become adroit at lip-reading.

And to see him amongst the members of his own family, you wouldn't realise the fact that he was profoundly deaf. I mean, you could detonate a bomb beside him and he would be totally unaware of it.

[13 : 57] And yet, to watch him interact with members of the family, you wouldn't realise that this man had a profound deafness.

So, does speech impediment here in our text mean just that? Or does it mean something like a pronounced stammer?

You know, we use the term loosely in that way. And if it was a pronounced stammer, then I think his impediment would have added to his frustration and increased his level of suffering.

And maybe even more, if he was able to hear at an earlier stage in life. Able to formulate in his mind words, but problematic for him, to put them into speech.

And if that is so, you could understand his reluctance to speak and his withdrawal into his silent world. But it may be that the Bible means us to understand that this man was totally incapable of speech.

[15 : 23] And all of these difficulties were impinging on his lifestyle and leaving him, I would suggest, a lonely figure in the community. I have already referred to what I call selective hearing.

Hearing only what we want to hear. And mentally blocking out what we do not want to hear. But this man didn't even have selective hearing.

He was deaf and possibly a deaf mute. And this man is illustrative of how we all are by nature.

We are deaf by nature when it comes to the matter of hearing what God has to say. So before I say anything else, let us ask ourselves the question today, do we hear and recognize the voice of God in his truth?

The authoritative voice of God in his truth. You know, the authoritative voice of God was the means that God used to bring Abraham out of here.

[16 : 43] To step out in faith, to leave the people he had grown up with, and to step out on the path of life along with God.

So, do we hear and recognize the authoritative voice of God in his truth? Or do we close our ears to what God has to say, giving a deaf ear to the authoritative voice of God?

Well, you remember, the psalmist behaved quite differently. He speaks in this way, let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his sakes.

In other words, he was deeply desirous of hearing what God had to say. And so you find this written, because I trust in thee, O Lord, cause me to hear thy loving kindness free when morning doth appear.

Cause me to know the way wherein my path should be, for why my soul on high I do lift up to thee. So, let's ask ourselves, does that desire for intimacy of fellowship with the Lord God characterize our lives this day?

[18 : 05] The man that was brought to Christ, a man who was deaf, had a speech impediment. Secondly, the miracle performed by Christ.

And you notice that the friends who brought this man to Christ had their own preconceived notion as to how Christ should heal this man.

How do we know? Well, they begged him to lay his hand on him. In other words, they were saying to Jesus, you just place your hand on this man and he will be healed.

And does that not tell us quite a bit about ourselves? We would dare to tell the Lord God how he ought to deal with this deaf mute.

Does it not tell us much about the kind of conceited, inflated view we have of ourselves and our knowledge? This is how you will heal this man.

[19 : 28] You know, the Son of God in our nature didn't have such a concept of himself. Remember how he agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane. Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

Not my will, but yours be done. How we learned this very valuable lesson of being reconciled to the divine will rather than daring to suggest to God how he should proceed.

It's very evident from the context that Christ had his own way of dealing with this man. Mark tells us Jesus took him aside from the multitude.

You know, there are times when Christ addresses you very powerfully in the middle of a crowd and you feel, perhaps, that you are a solitary figure.

That he has isolated you in the crowd and placed his finger on your life at that moment. Other times, he may put you alone through something in your providence or through illness in order to deal with you and your need.

[20 : 55] And here, Christ isolated this man from the rest of the crowd. How did he do it? Did he use sign language? Remember, the man was profoundly deaf.

Or did he just put his hand on his shoulder to indicate that they should move apart from the rest? We're not told except that he took him aside from the crowd.

You see, God in Christ has his own ways of taking us aside privately so that we are aware of being face to face with the Lord.

Remember, he used a bush in the desert to attract the attention of Moses as he shepherded his father-in-law's sheep. The Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.

And here, he brings this man physically close to him. So close that only the length of his arm separated the deaf man from Jesus.

[21 : 59] How do we know? Well, it's very simple. Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. So that tells us he was only an arm's length from him.

He was that close to him. Why? Why did he put his finger in his ears? Could it be for the very simple reason that he was signing or indicating to this deaf man, I'm going to do something about your defective hearing?

And then by using spittle and touching his tongue, indicating I'm going to do something about your speech impediment. Did he sign to him to open his mouth and put out his tongue?

We're not told. But what I will say is this. Jesus is speaking to this man in a language he understands. And in doing that, Jesus enters into this man's silent world.

Here is the great king of glory in our nature, the creator of heaven and earth, the sinless lamb of God, and he comes down to the level of this man in his depth of need.

[23 : 20] He's identifying with this man's condition in all of its righteousness, in all of his suffering, in all of his distress. Jesus comes directly to the place where this man is.

And I think that is immensely wonderful. Because Jesus does that with sinners like you and me too.

He deals with us according to our situation and circumstances and need. He comes alongside us. Who better knows and understands our heart than the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us he himself knew what was in the man. He knows what's in your heart.

And we're also told by Mark that Jesus looked up to heaven. That could be the sign of prayer. He's looking to God.

[24 : 35] We're told here he looked up to heaven. God. Now you might think that Jesus might have healed this person because he himself is God in our nature.

Could he not have healed him from the resources of his own deity? But you have to remember Jesus isn't there in the capacity of his own deity.

he's there as the servant of the Lord. And he looks to his father to do this. He prays to his heavenly father.

It's a wonderful example of the incarnate Christ. And he's relying not at his own immediate strength for this.

He's looking to his heavenly father. And then we are told something else. Jesus sighed and spoke one word a father.

[25 : 47] And Mark tells us the meaning of this word a father be opened. And Mark tells us his ears were opened his tongue was released and he spoke plainly.

There was no delay. The miracle is further identity. Further proof of the identity of this person.

You remember how Mark begins his gospel. Way back in chapter one. And you remember how he writes the first words of this gospel.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God. And you may be saying, what's so interesting about that?

What's so unusual about that? Is it not straightforward enough? Why should anyone take note of how Mark begins his gospel? Well, for this very reason, the word gospel literally means good news.

[26 : 57] Read again the beginning of the gospel. The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mark wishes the readership to hear the message of good news that concerns Jesus Christ. And it's worth remembering that when you are reflecting on any part of this gospel that has been written by Mark, that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ.

And what is recorded in the gospel is all evidence that draws our attention to the good news and confirms the identity of Jesus Christ as God's Messiah.

The Old Testament speaks of the coming of the Messiah. People were waiting for him to come so that in the Old Testament you find statements like this in that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see again behold your God will come with vengeance with the recompense of God he will come and save you then the eyes of the blind shall be opened the ears of the deaf and stopped then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy and in that context where the Bible uses words deaf and blind it is speaking especially of the lack of spiritual sight and spiritual hearing and Christ during his earthly ministry tells us the marks that belong to the Messiah remember how he responded to the questioning of the disciples of

John the Baptist when they came with a question are you the one who is to come or shall we look to another for another and you remember the reply that he gave go and tell John what you hear and see and what you hear and see the blind receive their sight the lame walk lepers have cleansed the deaf hear the dead are raised up the poor have the good news preached to them in other words Jesus was saying I am indeed the promised Messiah and I am fulfilling the ministry that is spoken of by the prophets and you remember how there is further confirmation on the day of Pentecost Peter in the sermon that he preached men of Israel hear these words Jesus of Nazareth a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst as you yourselves know so Jesus gives us ample proof that he is indeed

[29 : 57] God's promised Messiah he alone is the Savior of sinners and there is none other. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. We are all being urged to submit to Christ.

Remember how the psalmist expresses it in Psalm 2 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him. So there is much proof as to the identity of this man.

The Bible teaches that God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed and of this he has given assurance to all by raising Jesus from the dead.

So in dealing with this man Christ not only gives further confirmation of his identity but he reveals the kind of person he is.

[31 : 17] How does he do that? Well I would suggest by taking this man aside. Jesus demonstrates how caring he is.

How truly compassionate he is. So that is further good news. Mark tells us that he sighed.

And from one point of view you could say it's kind of strange that he sighed. You could argue that he didn't have reason to sigh.

You know how some people make a habit of sighing loudly for a variety of reasons. But sometimes you feel there's no obvious valid reason why people are sighing.

Christ sighed. And from one perspective it's such an expression of human emotion isn't it? that great out breathing that emptying of your lungs where your muscles seem to go limp.

[32 : 28] And a time sign seems to be an indication of inability but you cannot apply that here. So you have to ask yourself why did he sigh?

Was the sign an indication that power had gone out from him? You remember the woman who came behind him with the discharge of blood?

And you remember what she was saying to herself if I touch even his garments I will be made well. And we are told in that context that Jesus perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him immediately turned about in the crowd and said who touched my garments?

and at one level it seemed such a stupid question when the crowd were thronging around him but one person had touched in a very special way.

So was that the reason for his sign here? yet we know that he healed others without sign. And I said you could argue that there was no reason to sign but then as the perfect God man surrounded by sinful imperfect men I would suggest he had every reason to sign.

[33 : 59] sign but his sign could very well tell us how Jesus was affected or moved by the effect of sin in the life of this man.

Remember man was created in a state of perfection as far as we understand the creation of man in the garden of Eden no blemish no physical impediments created in the image of God to reflect the glory of God and here Jesus comes face to face with the effect of sin in the life of fallen humanity.

This poor man who does not hear who cannot speak and Jesus is moved by his plight. He's moved by it with a heart of infinite compassion and do you see what that says to you and to me that in God there is no un-Christ likeness at all.

That there's something about this response of Jesus that tells that this is something that's the very heart the very being of God himself.

God is like this he is full of compassion. Remember we are reminded of that in the very first psalm that we sung here together today psalm 111 is the Lord is gracious he is full of compassion.

[35 : 53] And then again in the second psalm that we sung together the second version of psalm 145 and again there is reference the Lord of God is gracious compassionate is he also.

The psalmist recognized that there were depths of compassion in God. He is full of pity as a father shows compassion to his children so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him says the psalmist in another instance and we are told when Jesus himself went ashore he saw a great crowd he had compassion on them and healed their sick so that suggests to us that God is moved by our human condition examples from the Old Testament God heard the groaning of the people who were slaves in Egypt God remembered his covenant with

Abraham with Isaac and with Jacob God saw the people of Israel and God knew so let me ask are you here today with a crushing burden one that you find increasingly hard to bear is it too heavy for you well rather than think under the weight of a crushing burden will you not take the advice of scripture what's the advice of scripture cast your burden on the Lord and you might be saying why should I do that well the reply of the word of God is this cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you God is merciful and ultra compassionate Jesus sighs and then he spoke and that tells us something else about this person who is he he's the

Messiah the anointed one of God the promised one who is truly compassionate and when he speaks we see the sovereign power that belongs to him more good news I have already mentioned how those who brought the man requested that Jesus place his hand on him but Jesus didn't place his hand on him he makes it very plain I will heal in my way he demonstrates his wondrous power he but spoke one word a father one authoritative powerful word and you get the impression that the man was immediately given the ability to hear and to speak almost before Jesus reached the last letter of that word immediately says Mark straightway it's a term that Mark is very fond of using his ears were opened and the impediment of his tongue was loosed and he spoke plainly immediately as if to underline his authority as the second person of the trinity in our nature it's an astonishing miracle the man not only hears but he speaks in an understandable manner no it's beyond my ability to describe it to you because

I'm just a layman when it comes to medical knowledge but if a doctor were present here I think he or she would tell us that someone who did not hear before would have to go through a steep learning curve to make sense of all the sounds that they now hear you see as a child we learn to decipher the sounds that we hear and it's not long before an infant learns to decipher the voice of a loving mother and a loving father from every other voice they learn to decipher sounds but here is this man and he's hearing there is full restoration of hearing and speech that bears the stamp of God at work well could I suggest that this is also true when God blesses with spiritual hearing and removes our stammering tongue so that we are able to sing the praises of

[41 : 24] Emmanuel this man standing before he speaks Jesus speaks the word that's all that's all he does now it may be that many respect his power but without his power being united to his compassion he wouldn't look at you many might give place to the compassion of God but compassion without power would not have opened the ears of the deaf man or loose his tongue the savior is in possession of both power and compassion suited to all our needs this is how one person wrote Lord I was deaf I could not hear the thrilling music of thy voice but now

I hear thee and rejoice and all thine uttered words are dear Lord I was dumb I could not speak the grace and glory of thy name but now as touched with living flame my lips thine eager praises wake the miracle performed by Christ the man brought to Christ and lastly my time is gone the momentous impact on the spectators Jesus wanted the news of the miracle to be kept he charged them they should tell no man they weren't to tell a soul it's not something new twice in the first chapter you find that the man who was a leper and healed and Jesus told him not to tell anyone and when he raised the daughter of

Jairus the same thing and Mark tells us here the more he charged them so much the more a great deal they published it you know maybe it's just a cynic in me but sometimes when you tell someone no don't tell this to anyone you can be sure that the next person that person meets they're going to tell what they were told that's human nature you can almost be 100% certain if you say don't tell this to us all next person they meet did you hear this so and so so on and that's it but that's not the reason Jesus is doing here he's trying to prevent the disciples and especially other people from a hysterical response that would make him into some kind of political figure

Jesus hadn't come primarily as a miracle worker he'd come as the savior of sinners and so by way of application note the response of the crowd they were astonished beyond measure you know there's no category in which you can put Jesus he defies every category there's something astonishing and wonderful about him he is the God of heaven who has become incarnate and what these people were glimpsing is something of his innate glory his transcendent quality and it's asking of you and me to fall down at the feet of Jesus and let's be lost in wonder love and praise he's come to make a new creation and ultimately a new heavens and a new earth and you know there'll be no deafness there there'll be no person who is without speech death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning or crying or pain anymore there'll be no cancer there no heart problems and you see this is here just a little a little foretaste or a little glimpse of the work that

Jesus has ultimately come to the world to do he's come to restore sinners to himself so that if any man be in Christ Jesus they are a new creation and that new creation has already begun in the lives of those who have been brought to faith in Christ no eye has seen nor ear heard nor the heart of man imagine what God has prepared for those who love him he's opened your ears to hear the words of life ah but my friend that's just the beginning it's so Jesus has already said to you can you hear me now can you hear me now can you hear the voice of Jesus in the gospel calling you reassuring you of the forgiveness of sins by faith in

[47 : 04] Jesus Christ promising and reassuring that having begun a good work he will complete it in the day of Jesus Christ so do you see what Marcus said right at the very end of this passage something that they say they were astonished beyond measure and this is what they say he has done all things well do you know where these words first occurred in the Bible in the in the Greek translation of the Old Testament of Genesis chapter 1 verse 31 when God had made the heavens and the earth it was very good it was beautiful it was a thing of beauty and glory and that's what the people are saying here they're echoing these words they can see the hand of the creator fashioning and refashioning this fallen creation you and

I were growing old and we know that and unless Jesus comes first we're destined for a grave for decay but you know my friends that's not the good news is it because the gospel reassures us that one day those who die in Christ their bodies will rise again from the dead and be reunited with their souls and be forever with the Lord that's the good news of the gospel oh do you rejoice in it today someone put it over a thousand tongues to sing my great redeemer's praise the glories of my

God and king the triumphs of his grace he breaks the power of cancelled sin he sets the prisoner free his blood can make make the foul clean his blood avails for me hear him ye deaf his praise ye dumb your loosened tongues employ ye blind behold your saviour come and leap ye lame for joy is there that element of joy in your heart and mind today the man who's brought to Christ death and without speech impediment the miracle performed by Christ power of hearing and the power of speech instantaneous the momentous impact on the spectators they were beyond measure astonished he has done all things well he makes both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak and he's still doing it let us pray oh eternal

God we thank thee that thou art the God of great power the God of infinite compassion who makes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak and those who have been given the ability to hear and the ability to speak will never cease in proclaiming your praises throughout the endless ages of eternity all may we be found among them and the glory shall be thine in Jesus name we ask it Amen