

Mark 7:24-37

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[0 : 00] Well, you can feel free to turn in the Bible to Mark chapter 7. We are looking tonight at Mark chapter 7, verses 24 to 37.

So we are doing a series going through the Gospel of Mark this year, and we're almost halfway through, and we're going to finish it on Easter. So if you keep coming, then we will get through the rest of Mark, which is the shortest and probably the first Gospel written in the New Testament about Jesus.

So we're going to look at two stories tonight. I'm going to focus in especially on the first one, but after what we do in the evening services, for those of you who haven't been here before, is we have a question and answer time after the sermon.

And so if you have questions about the second passage or about the first passage, you can feel free to store those up, and we'll have five or ten minutes at the end where you can interact and we can try to go a little deeper.

But let me read this text to begin. Mark chapter 7, starting at verse 24. And from there he, Jesus, arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

[1 : 22] And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet.

Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And Jesus said to her, let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

But she answered him, yes, Lord, yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. And he said to her, for this statement, you may go your way. The demon has left her daughter.

And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone. 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, I wonder if you've ever felt like an outsider.

[3 : 01] Maybe you've lived in another country or traveled to another country where you didn't know the language. And the weather and the food and the way people act and the way people interact with each other, it just feels different.

And even if you're staying there for a while, you just don't quite feel at home. Or maybe you're from another country or even from another part of this country.

And you've come here to New Haven and you feel like, man, I'm still trying to fit in here. I'm struggling. I still don't feel like this is home.

Or maybe you've had to start a new job, get used to new co-workers or go to a new school or move to a new neighborhood or become part of a new extended family. So the first time I met my wife's extended family was when we had just started dating in the summer of 2006.

And I went to her mom's house. This was just a few weeks after we started dating to have lunch with her and her mom and her sister. And for an hour and a half, they talked almost without stopping about their dogs.

[4 : 14] So my mother-in-law owns a dog kennel and a dog grooming business. And so they were talking about their customers' dogs. They were talking about their own dogs, the dogs that they had had over the years when they had grown up, that had been part of their family.

And of course, they knew them all by name. And so I'm sitting at the table. I'm like trying to keep this straight in my mind. I don't know anything about dog breeds. And, you know, what's the difference between all these?

And by the end of it, my mother-in-law said, boy, you look exhausted. Do you want to go? Do you need to go take a nap or something?

And so just so you know my background, I have never had a dog in my household. I am allergic to dogs, which is if you have a dog, it's OK.

I can come to your house for dinner, but I probably won't stay with you for a whole week. And when I was younger, my uncle had two dogs, and one of them tried to bite me once when I was shoveling snow at his house.

[5 : 18] And I wasn't looking. We had to figure out whether he really bit me. And I guess maybe that's one of my childhood phobias, whatever. But I have never had a dog, and I would be very happy never to have one.

Thankfully, so far, my wife and I have agreed and found a middle ground. Anyway, sometimes I think people can feel in a similar way, sometimes many people feel like an outsider in the church.

I was talking to somebody who's been coming to this church now for a few years, actually, and he said, the first time I came to this church, I was trembling as I walked in those doors.

And I thought the building, I thought that the roof might cave in over me. And actually, I had been wanting to come for a long time, but I didn't come because of that.

And, you know, you can even come to church regularly for a long time, but still feel on the outside, still feel like, I don't belong here.

[6 : 22] And, and you don't feel the freedom to be yourself, and you don't, you feel like you have to put on a mask. And even if your life is falling apart, you feel like when you come to church, you have to sort of hold it all in and not fall apart in front of everybody else.

Because you feel like, I don't quite feel comfortable here. Well, if you feel that way, if you've ever felt that way, if you know people who feel that way, this passage is good news for you.

So in this passage, Jesus encounters two people who were outsiders in different ways. We see this, this woman in the first half of the passage, whose daughter is afflicted with, with an evil spirit.

And then we see a disabled man, a man who's deaf and speech impaired. So I want to look at these stories and look at them a little bit in parallel. I'm going to focus mostly on the first one, but a little bit on the second one.

So, so, so, so, and, and ask the question, what do we see about how Jesus relates to these people who in different ways were outsiders and had every reason to feel excluded in their culture?

[7 : 37] So, so the first thing that we see is that Jesus goes to places where no one would expect him to go. Now, we need to remember, Jesus was a Jewish teacher of the Jewish scriptures who had 12 Jewish disciples.

He was raised by Jewish parents and he lived in a Jewish town. But in this whole section, Jesus is traveling outside of Jewish territories, traveling in Gentile territory.

So verse 24 says he went to Tyre and Sidon. That was the region to the north of Israel. And then verse 31 says he went to the Decapolis, which is a region of 10 cities to the east of the Sea of Galilee.

Now, Tyre was an important and prosperous trading city, but it also had a history of being hostile to the Jewish people and the Jewish faith.

It was a center of pagan religion. And the Jewish historian Josephus said the people of Tyre are notoriously our bitterest enemies. So when it says Jesus went to Tyre and Sidon, that was the last place most people would have expected him to go.

[8 : 50] You think, why would Jesus go there? Jesus was a poor Galilean preacher and he's going to the wealthy suburbs and just hanging out there for a while.

And you think, Jesus, people are going to at least look at you funny and probably discriminate against you. Why are you going there? Now, it says that Jesus needed some time to get alone with his disciples.

So part of the reason he went there is he wanted to go somewhere where he wasn't well known. If you look at Mark 6 and 7, he was in Galilee, his home territory, and he was mobbed.

There were crowds coming to him from everywhere. And so it says his disciples couldn't even find time to eat. They were just, people were asking for his help. They would go across the lake to the other side of the lake and somebody else would be there.

And a whole bunch of crowd of other people would be there asking for him to heal them or teach them. And then they'd go to the other side and there'd be another crowd. And finally, Jesus said, all right, we got to get out of here because I need to spend some time.

[9 : 52] I want to spend some time with you. I don't want us to be totally mobbed by the crowds all the time. I want some time alone where I can invest in you guys. So they, so he says, let's go where nobody knows us.

We'll go on a little vacation, a little retreat together. And so that's where they go. But of course, even in this place where nobody would expect him to go, people are looking for him.

Desperate people are drawn to Jesus. In the second story, a group of people bring Jesus, this man who's deaf and speech impaired. Now, just think about it.

Think about what, what would your life be like if you couldn't hear what anyone was saying to you and you couldn't speak clearly enough to articulate what you want from someone else.

Now, you'd probably figure out sign language. And there's a lot of ways that I think we've tried to grow in finding ways to accommodate different people.

[11 : 00] But still, that, that would be hard. Maybe you have a, maybe you've walked alongside someone who has a speech impediment or some kind of a disability.

And, and, and it's challenging. And if you're, if you're, if you're living, if you live with them for a time, you realize a little bit of what it was, what it would be like to be in their shoes.

And the challenges he would face in living day by day. This disability can be an isolating and painful experience. And it can make you feel excluded in all kinds of ways.

So, so that's one. This other, but then in the first story, there's this woman and she's desperate.

And she comes to Jesus begging him to cast the demon out of her daughter, to heal her afflicted daughter. And this woman is also an outsider in almost every respect compared to Jesus.

[11 : 58] So she's, first of all, she's a woman. And back then, most Jewish teachers, male teachers would never talk with women. They, they did not accept women as students to learn the law from them.

And most Jewish rabbis would have even refused to engage them in conversation at that time. She's a Gentile. She's a Syrophoenician. She's descended from the enemies of Jesus' people.

And then her daughter had an unclean spirit. She's a Syrophoenician. Which would make many people fearful of associating with her. They think, man, her kid's sort of messed up. She must be sort of messed up.

Right? People, people think that way. And act that way. Back then and now. But there was something about Jesus that even though she had all these reasons that she might feel excluded, there was something that drew her to him.

And she was drawn to him. And she even fell at his feet. And there was something about him that invited her to him.

[13 : 08] Right? In both cases, these people are in desperate need. They're facing something far bigger than they can handle. And no one else can solve their problem. But they see that Jesus has come close enough to them.

And they reach out to him for help. Now, how does Jesus respond to these requests from people who are outsiders? Well, in the case of the deaf man, the speech impaired man, Jesus takes him aside and he touches him.

You know, Jesus doesn't, Jesus doesn't remain at a distance. He doesn't say, oh, I don't want to know about this guy. No, he comes close to the man. He actually takes the man away from the crowd because he doesn't want to just do something to, for a spectacle to the crowd.

He doesn't want to just use this guy to show off to people. He cares about this guy as an individual. So he takes him aside from the crowd and he puts his fingers in his ears and says, and by doing that, he's saying, I'm going to open up your ears.

And then he spits and touches his tongue. You think, what's he doing there? Well, he's, symbolically, he's saying, I'm going to fill your mouth with my life.

[14 : 26] In this very physical way, he's saying to this man, I'm not, I'm, I'm going to touch you. And even when other people might shy away from you and keep their distance from you.

And I'm not just going to zap you from a distance and heal you, but I'm going to come near to you and give you myself and give you my life. And then he speaks his word.

He says, be opened. Jesus does a work of recreation through his word and through his touch. And verse 35 could be translated.

It says his tongue was released. It could actually be translated, the chain of his tongue was loosed. It's an act of liberating mercy from Jesus.

It's a beautiful picture. So that's how Jesus responds to that man. Now, what about this woman? Now, with this woman, it's a little confusing, right?

[15 : 26] When you first read this story. Because at first, Jesus seems to resist the woman's request. And he says, this woman comes and pleads with him.

Help me. My daughter is tormented. And he says, let the children be fed first, for it's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

And you think, what does that mean? In Jesus' time, the Jewish people understood themselves to be the children of God. And they referred to everybody else, the Gentiles.

Sometimes they referred to Gentiles as dogs. And it was almost always a negative, pejorative term. Dogs were scavengers who ate garbage and dead things.

They were worthless and unclean. And you should stay away from them. So you might say, what in the world does Jesus mean? By using this pretty loaded term.

[16 : 32] Is he dissing this woman? Is he wanting her to go away? Is he calling her worthless? I want to deal with this verse because on the surface of it, I think it's one of the hardest verses in the Gospels to understand.

So first, I want to, but I think it's not, and I think it's one of the verses that is hard for us to understand. Because we weren't there to see things like the expression on Jesus' face and the tone that he used and the way that the woman understood it.

And lots of other, all those non-verbal cues. Right? We don't get those in the text. And so we have to step back a little bit and try to understand what's going on because the way that we might read this might come across to us in a totally different way than Jesus meant it.

So I want to do a step back and try to understand this, what's going on here. So first, look at the broader context of the chapter. Okay? If you find a verse in the Bible that seems really confusing and even seems offensive, one of the, there's a couple things you can do.

One is step back and look at the broader context around the verse. And then one is sort of focus in more, more in depth on the, on the verse itself. So that's what I want to do.

[17 : 49] First, look at the broader context. So this whole chapter in Mark, as we've seen, is about Jesus entering Gentile territory and blessing people who are considered outsiders.

So in the first half of chapter 7, Jesus is debating with some other Jewish religious teachers, the Pharisees. And he's debating with them about what it means to be clean and acceptable to God and what it means to be unclean and not acceptable to God.

And he's saying to the Pharisee, he says, the main point that he says is it's not what's on the outside that makes you clean or unclean. Whether you wash your hands in a certain ceremonial way or whether you stay away from certain foods or whether you follow the ceremonial laws in the Old Testament, he says, that's not what it's about.

He says, whether you're clean or unclean, it's a matter of the heart. What's on the inside? It's what comes out of your heart that makes you unclean.

And in verse 19, Mark explains, he says, Mark says, Jesus declared all foods to be clean. Now, back then, that was a radical statement. We might sort of pass over it.

[19 : 07] But back then, and even today, observant Jews distinguished themselves partly by the foods they ate and the foods they didn't eat, by keeping kosher.

Right? And so, most people in Jesus' day, certainly other Jewish rabbis, would not sit down to a meal at a Gentile's house.

Because that would make them unclean. And they saw Gentiles as outsiders. But Jesus' statement was radical because basically he was saying not only the implication is not only are all foods clean, but all people can become clean.

It's not just whether you're Jewish or Gentile. It's whether it's a matter of the heart and God's work in your heart.

In other words, Jesus came as the Jewish Messiah to fulfill the Jewish scriptures, but he also came to break open the way so that Gentiles could come into God's presence through Jesus and eat at his table.

[20 : 20] So that's what's going on. Jesus is breaking down some of these dividing walls that existed in his society between Jews and Gentiles. And then, if you go on to chapter 8, Jesus feeds 4,000 people.

Now, if you go back to chapter 6, Jesus already fed 5,000 people. And you sort of think, wait a minute, what happened? The same story gets repeated twice. You know, did Mark sort of forget and just repeat himself?

Well, no. The first time he fed the 5,000 people, he was in Jewish territory. And then he goes into Gentile territory and feeds 4,000 people. And the whole point is, Jesus is doing the same kinds of things among the Gentiles, among the outsiders, that he already did among the Jewish people, among the insiders.

He's healing them. He's feeding them. He's casting out evil spirits. He does the same good and liberating works among the Gentiles that he did among the Jews.

So, that's the broader context of this chapter. And so, in the broader context, verse 27 can't mean that Jesus is just totally rejecting this woman and trying to push her away.

[21 : 32] Because that would be the opposite thing that the whole chapter and this whole section of Mark is about. So, that's the broader context. Now, let's look in at this verse a little bit.

Okay, in this verse, Jesus does use the terms children and dogs, which are commonly used to refer to Jews and Gentiles. But he actually uses a different form of the word for dogs.

He uses a form of the word that means little dogs or pet dogs. Not sort of stray scavenger dogs that are scary and roam through, you know, try to bite you.

But dogs that are part of the household. And the woman actually picks up on that cue. Now, we'll get to her response in just a minute. But Jesus is using the term in a different way than it was normally used.

Verse 27, he's also saying, he also begins by saying, he says, Let the children, referring either to Jesus' disciples, Jewish disciples, or to the Jewish people as a whole, let the children be fed first.

[22 : 38] Now, if somebody's fed first, it doesn't mean that nobody else will ever get fed. It just means Jesus' priority right now is first and foremost with his disciples and his people.

And in the context, part of the reason Jesus is there is that he's just trying to get some quiet time away with his closest followers to invest in the guys who are going to become the future leaders of the Christian movement.

Eventually. And he doesn't just want them to be totally drained and pushed aside by all the crowds. And so he's trying to make some space for him to invest in his closest followers.

So that's a little bit of the context. He's saying, well, I can't let my disciples go hungry. And in order for, by just, I can't just leave, I can't just ditch them to go with you to your house.

And then somebody else is going to ask me to go to their house. And somebody else is going to ask me to go to their house. And then the whole purpose I came here is thwarted. Now, by saying all this, Jesus isn't intending to push her aside.

[23 : 45] He's actually inviting her to respond. It's almost like, for lack of a better word, it's almost like Jesus is playing devil's advocate. You know, have you ever had a teacher, and the teacher has sort of tried to represent a certain position, but they want you to respond.

They almost want, they're saying, well, you know, such and such and such is true. But the way they say it, they want you to say, but no, but isn't there something else?

And they're trying to teach you by a conversational style. They're not trying to shut you down and just have the only word, but they're trying to engage you in a conversational style to help you get to a certain conclusion.

Another way to put it is that Jesus is telling here a short parable. And in Mark, Jesus tells parables to reveal the nature of the kingdom of God.

So on the surface, Jesus is doing very well-known images. And here, children and dogs. But the parables of Jesus also contain spiritual truths.

[25 : 02] And the parables are a little bit like a door. A little bit like if you're walking through a dark hallway, and there's a door to somebody's apartment that's cracked open just a bit.

And you can smell the food they're cooking for dinner, and you can hear some music that they're playing, maybe they have some friends over, and you can see the light from inside their apartment.

And you can't really see what's going on just by walking past the door. But it's sort of an invitation. You think, maybe I should knock. Huh, why did they leave it open?

It's sort of a crack open. And so you only can, but you can only get on the inside if you actually knock on the door. And say, can I come in? And Jesus' parables are sort of like that.

They don't just sort of lay everything out for you so that you can understand everything all explicitly right away. But they're sort of like that door that's open to crack.

[26 : 03] And it says, if you knock, I'll open the door. And you can come in and be part of the family. And that's what Jesus' parables are doing in lots of different places.

And I think that's what this statement is doing here. It's an invitation for this woman to knock. And you know what? This woman totally gets it. This woman understands what Jesus is doing probably better than we do at first.

She picks up on all Jesus' cues. She says, yes, Lord. But even the little dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. Now what does she mean by that?

She's basically saying, she says, Jesus, I know. I know I'm not an Israelite. I know I'm a Gentile. I know that people see me as an outsider.

And she says, I'm not coming to you because I deserve help, because I'm better than other people. I'm just coming to you because I need help. And I have nowhere else to go.

[27 : 04] And I don't need to be the center of attention. I'm not asking for you to leave your disciples behind and come with me to my house. I believe that you have enough bread to feed your disciples and feed me at the same time.

You don't need to snatch it away from them. I can... You have enough to feed us all. You have enough to meet my need as well as theirs.

And Jesus says... Jesus is really impressed with this woman's response. In fact, Matthew tells the same story. And Matthew expands a little bit on the story. But in Matthew, Jesus responds by saying, Oh woman, great is your faith.

In other words, faith in this context means reaching out to Jesus and not letting anything get in your way. And Jesus says to that woman, You have true faith.

Because you had every reason to feel excluded. And feel like there are all these barriers. And all these reasons why you couldn't come to me.

[28 : 17] But you didn't let... From your society, from your culture, from other people's expectations, from things people have called you and said to you. And you didn't let those get in your way. Like... She just came to Jesus.

And said... Because she said, Jesus, I need you. I want you. And... And I think you have enough to meet my need. Now the disciples of Jesus must have been thinking, What's going on here?

You know, the disciples of Jesus would have thought she's the least likely person to have true faith in Jesus. But in the end, she has more insight into who Jesus is than all of them do.

She hears and understands a parable of Jesus. She's the first person in the whole Gospel of Mark to hear and rightly understand and rightly respond to a parable of Jesus.

In the next chapter, chapter 8, the disciples don't get it. And Jesus says, Do you still not understand? And yet this woman does.

[29 : 31] This woman is like Jacob in the Old Testament, who wrestled with the angel of God and didn't give up until at the end of the night he received the blessing of God.

And the invitation to us is to come to Jesus like this woman did. Not because we deserve help. Not because we're better than everybody else.

Not because we're insiders and other people are outsiders. Not because you have the inside track on anything in the church. But simply because we need Jesus.

We need his help. We need his grace. And Jesus has enough for anyone who comes to him. You see, all of us by nature, the Bible says all of us by nature are outsiders.

Spiritual outsiders. Every one of us was once far off from God. Ephesians says we were without hope and without God in the world.

[30 : 34] And even in the Old Testament, the people of Israel, they were all descended from Abraham. And who was Abraham before God called him? Abraham's family were pagan moon worshippers. They were outsiders too until God came to Abraham and called him.

You see, if you trace it back long enough, all of us were on the outside. And God brought us into his family. But in Jesus Christ, we've been brought near.

And it says we have access to God the Father through his Holy Spirit. So through Jesus' word and through his touch, Jesus brings outsiders into God's family.

That's what these two passages are about. The people who felt excluded, who felt like outsiders, who other people would have seen as outsiders, Jesus brings them in and brings them into his family.

And that's his invitation to us. Don't let anything get in your way. Of coming to Jesus. Don't let other people's expectations or your feelings about what somebody else thinks about you or your own insecurities.

[31 : 51] Jesus is what you need more than anything else. And Jesus has enough to feed you and to feed everybody else who comes to him. So don't stop seeking until you find him.

Don't stop knocking until the door is opened and you come in. Jesus has come to bring us in that we can be part of his family.

He's come to make all things new. In verse 37, it concludes this section. And the people say, he has done all things well. It's actually very similar to what is said at the end of Genesis 1.

It says, God saw everything that he had made and it was very good. And the point of this is that Jesus has come to make all things new. He's come to break down all the barriers that stood between us and God.

And all the barriers that we put up between us and each other and us and other people. And he's come to make a whole new family based on his grace and mercy alone.

[33 : 05] That's the good news. That's what these stories are about. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, thank you.

Thank you that you go where nobody else would have expected you to go. Thank you, Lord, that no one is beyond the reach of your touch, your healing touch, your saving word.

Lord, I pray that each one of us here, Lord, that we would reach out to you and that we would know the assurance that you speak to us.

that you welcome us with open arms into your family. And Lord, I pray that we would that we would be a church, that we would be a people who aren't putting up barriers for other people, but instead who are bringing them to you.

As these people brought this deaf and speech impaired man to Jesus. Lord, may we be bringing others to you that they may know, Lord, your saving grace, your forgiveness, your hope that you and the promise of eternal life that you give to everyone who turns to you.

[34 : 33] We pray this in your name. Amen. If you have a question, feel free to raise your hand. I'll do the best I can to answer. Or I'll admit if I can't. Mary.

Mary. Mary. Tyre, a city or a country? Yeah, so Tyre, it was a city, but it was sort of like, it also had a region around it.

Sidon was a region. Sidon was a region. Yeah. Yeah. So it's interesting, actually, Tyre was south of Sidon.

So in verse 31, it says he went from Tyre through Sidon, which would have been going north, and then southeast. Which, the only reason you would do that is if you were going outside of the borders of Israel.

So Jesus is very deliberate in this passage in going through Gentile territory, foreign territory outside his home country. So he's being very deliberate in how he does that.

[35 : 46] Other questions? Lindsay?

Lindsay? In verse 36, why does he charge him to tell no one? Ah, yes. In verse 36, why does Jesus charge him to tell no one?

So Jesus does this a few times in the Gospel of Mark, and so, and a couple of times people don't obey this command.

Instead, they go around and proclaim it all the more zealously. And usually what happens as a result is Jesus gets mobbed with crowds. And so, sometimes, so in Mark chapter, sometimes Jesus does, Jesus doesn't always say this.

He says it, I think, strategically when he believes that too much publicity too quickly would obscure the focus of his mission.

[36 : 51] And it would end up with just a big mob following him when he either wants to have some more focused teaching time with some of his closer followers or for a variety, or where he wants to spend some time in different places, but he also wants to move on and not be totally contained in one place forever.

So he strategically, I think, decides when to encourage people to go and tell and when to encourage people, hold it for the moment, because you don't, you, because the people don't really understand, they understand that Jesus has done this great miracle to heal this guy, but Jesus' purpose in coming into the world wasn't just to heal, you know, a thousand people way back then.

If that was Jesus' only purpose in coming into the world, that he healed a thousand people way back then, we never would be here today because that would have had no effect on us except maybe a few historians.

Right? I was a history major, so I can make fun of historians. Right? Who would be interested in some very obscure figure back then. But Jesus' reason for coming into the world was ultimately to die on a cross.

And that's what the whole Gospel of Mark ultimately leads up to. And so, Jesus is, by his healings, he's giving a picture of what God's restoring and healing work looks like in people's lives, and he's showing compassion to these people, but he also knows his purpose is more than that.

[38 : 25] And so, he's balancing those things. Any others?

Any others? Any others? Any others? Any others? Any others? Any others? Any others? Any others? You usually have a question.

I don't think. You're thinking. All right. I'll let you think. All right. Anyone else? This is your last chance.

I think your sermon hit all points. My sermon answered all the questions. Wow. That's, thanks, Tyrone. That's a first.

If that's true, praise the Lord. Neil. Yeah. Seems like in Jesus' day there was a lot of unclean spirits and demon and whatnot.

[39 : 30] Is this, is that, was that particular to his time period or do you, is there still that or not just as much now? Yeah.

So the question was, what about unclean spirits? There seemed to be a lot of them in Jesus' time. Do they still exist? What does that look like? Um, uh, so briefly I would say, uh, yes, uh, I think they do still exist.

Um, I think there's a, so one related question that people have is, is there a difference between, uh, someone who is oppressed or afflicted or, or possessed by a demon and, uh, mental illness?

And, and actually, even in the New Testament, the answer is very clearly yes. Uh, some people think, well, uh, that was just a way people used back then to talk about mental illnesses that they didn't understand.

And now we understand things better and we, uh, diagnose them with labels that we also don't really know what the labels mean. Um, but, uh, uh, in, in the, in the New Testament, it very clearly distinguishes people who have, for example, a seizure disorder.

[40 : 33] There's one word used for that and there's a different word, uh, used for, uh, being oppressed by a demon. Um, so even in the New Testament, there's a very careful distinction between, uh, uh, medical problems, uh, various kinds of, of, uh, what, what we would call today mental illnesses.

They didn't really use that term back then, um, as well as, uh, spiritual oppression from evil forces. Now, what does that, what does, uh, what do, how do unclean spirits act today?

Um, I think you'll get different answers if you ask different Christians who live in different parts of the world. Um, and if you talk to Christians, uh, from some other parts of the world and you ask them that question, do unclean spirits exist today?

They'd be like, of course, we just drove one out last week at church. Um, that's just pretty normal. And, and people, and for, for a variety of reasons.

Um, if you're here in the United States, uh, some, you know, there's some, uh, there's, you might or might not have that experience. Um, and, uh, so I would say generally, um, C.S. Lewis said there's two errors we can fall into in thinking about the devil and unclean spirits.

[41 : 50] We can either totally deny that they exist, which is really sort of naive. It's basically just saying since I haven't ever seen this, then it must not exist. Which, there's all kinds of things in the world that you might have never experienced yet, but are very real.

Um, on the other hand, the error can, the other side of it can be to be obsessed and fascinated with them. And I think in churches, uh, sometimes we can fall into those errors too.

Uh, there's some churches that are obsessed and fascinated with the work of evil spirits and are talking about them all the time, which is not right. Um, and then there's some churches where you never talk about them or even deny that they exist.

Um, so I think that they, uh, they, they manifest themselves in different ways. Um, and I, and I think that's, that's something that can, we can, uh, we probably all have a lot more to learn about.

But, may not be a full answer to your question, but it's a good discussion starter. All right. Um, let me, uh, yes, usually we make a few announcements.

[42 : 58] Um, get one of these bulletins if you didn't. Uh, they're on the chair as you walk out. Is that right, Lindsay? Are they back there somewhere? Um, uh, just, let's see, a couple of things coming up.

Um, if you're a member, we have a congregational meeting coming up in two weeks. Please notice that. And, um, there's, there's other announcements in here.

There's some, uh, snacks and hot drinks at the back. Feel free to take this time. We're, uh, in the evening service it's a small crowd, but part of why that's sort of nice is that you can get to know a couple people and then if you come again then you can sit with them or just, uh, get to, you know, develop some relationships pretty easily.

So, um, use this time afterwards to maybe get to know at least one other person. I'd encourage you. All right, let me close in a word of prayer. Uh, Lord, thanks for tonight and, uh, thank you for inviting us into your family, um, and sending your son to do that.

Lord, we pray that we would, uh, be joyful, um, that we would rejoice in, uh, the work that you have done and, Lord, that we have free access to you, um, through your Holy Spirit.

[44 : 09] And so, Lord, we pray that we would come before you boldly, um, that we'd come before you persistently for the things that we need and for others that we love and care for, uh, Lord, as this woman did and as, uh, these people did, uh, who are the, who are the friends of this man.

Lord, we, uh, pray that you would send us out from here with your grace and peace in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.