



## [Marveling at the Messiah Mark 7:31-37]

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When was the last time you were honestly and truly amazed at something? I remember when the stereograms grew in popularity. I was the one young man that could never see the hidden images. Ill never forget the day when I crossed my eyes, blurred me vision, and a rabbit jumped out at me.

I was amazed! So I checked out a book at the library and tried to find all the hidden images.

Today we encounter only one of three stories in Mark that does not find a counterpart in Matthew or Luke. We find a community that is truly astounded and amazed in the presence of Jesus Christ.

It is time that the people of God regain their sense of wonder at the amazing grace and abounding mercy of the Creator. *We are perishing or want of wonder, not for want of wonders -G.K. Chesterton.*

## Read [Mark 7:31-37]

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### A Malady (7:31-32)

**Geography** We find Jesus near the areas where he has already healed multitudes. Jesus is traveling from the west towards the 10-city region. This is not a direct journey and circuitous route would be the equivalent of you traveling to Atlanta through Fort Payne. The Messiah's journey leads him back to a largely non-Jewish location and near the area where He delivered the demonic man and cast the spirit of darkness into the swine.

**Jesus** There is something about Jesus that makes a non-Jewish audience bring a man with a malady to be touched. This would have made Jesus unclean. We are not told the man's name. Presumably, because the ailment made it impossible for the man to speak his name. You see, this individual was deaf and had difficulty speaking. **There is something about Jesus that attacks sick and hurting people.** *"It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick (Matt. 9:12).* There is something about Jesus that causes others to bring those in need to the One who is the healer and the lifter of our heads.

**Deaf-** translated literally the word implies someone with **dull or severely impaired hearing.** Most likely the man appears to have gone deaf later in life for if he had been deaf from birth he would never have learned how to speak.

**Speech** – literally he was almost mute or had extreme difficulty speaking. Some manuscripts describe the sufferer as having a harsh or hoarse manner of speaking.

**Like this man, you too have a hearing problem.**

Go to these people and say: You will always be listening, but never understanding; and you will always be looking, but never perceiving. 27 For the hearts of these people have grown callous, their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them. Acts 28:26-7

Sin always leads to malady. Sin leads prevents you from hearing the voice of the Savior. Pride is the prevention. Shame is the sickness. Jesus is the answer. **What is making you deaf today?**

## **A Miracle (7:33-35)**

This is the first occurrence of the healing of a deaf person in the Gospel of Mark. **How does Jesus respond?** He took him away. In **removing him from the crowd**, Jesus signifies that he is not simply a problem, or another face in the crowd, but a unique individual.

**He put his fingers in his ears.** What appears an odd gesture makes sense when we realize the man's disability prevents him from hearing, but *not experiencing the personal touch of Christ*. *Praise God this truth remains today, your sin prevents you from hearing but not experiencing the personal touch of Christ.*

**Saliva** We are struck by the method of Jesus' prescription. The Messiah spit (on his hand) and touched his tongue. *Spittle was thought in both the Jewish and Greco-Roman world to have healing properties.* This would not have been as surprising in the ancient Mediterranean world as it is to us; there are several ancient accounts of the use of saliva specially to cure blindness (the famous story told by Tacitus of how a blind man was cured by the saliva of emperor Vespasian). It is as if Jesus is taking the hope of the people in cultural legends and **showing them true power.**

**Jesus speaks** In the presence of this deaf man Jesus audibly sighs and declares in Aramaic Ephphatha—be opened. The declaration “be opened” in Mark is **singular**, it is formally addressed to the man (who ought not to be able to hear it!) rather than his ears, but in effect it is the ears which are commanded to function again

He thereby declared that it would shortly come to pass, that those who were destitute of the revealed truth would both hear and understand the majestic words of God -- Lactantius

**Immediately** The effect is immediate. Mark employs vivid language to emphasize the function of the ears and the untying of the tongue. The original Greek is vivid and concrete: the chain of his tongue was broken. In the NT, the word for chain most frequently means a chain or fetter that binds a prisoner. **Not only did the man regain his verbal abilities, he found freedom.** His personal prison door was opened. *“Bob”'s personal prison was opened.* In Christ, you are given freedom. “My chains are gone, I've been set free”

## A Marvelous Messiah (7:36-37)

**Silence** First, the command to silence protected the Son of God from false messianic expectations. The command to silence was a reminder that Jesus rules, “not with the warrior’s sword but the servant’s towel, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

Another purpose of the rule to quietness concerned the **importance of faith**. The crowd gathered to see miracles and experience the power of Jesus. Yet, Jesus constantly instructed that signs and wonders do not coerce faith. **It is by faith you are saved, through grace, it is a gift.**

**Extremely Astonished** The crowds were astonished beyond all measure indicating that this was a particularly impressive form of healing. **Their wonder is here more dramatically expressed (including the hapax legomonon “extremely/completely) and suggests that the healing of the deaf and dumb was a matter of particular amazement.**

The people of the Decapolis were amazed at the miraculous healing. Likewise the people of God should be amazed when we see the grace of Christ multiplied. *It is impossible to glimpse the majesty of the Savior and not come away amazed.* **Have you lost your sense of wonder?**

One vivid situation in my past illustrates what happens when you lose your sense awe. When we moved into our house my job was to tend to the grass. As any man, I want to have the best lawn in the world. One particular patch of clover gave resistance. I still remember the exact moment that our oldest (4 at the time) picked a clover blossom and handed it to me. He declared: dad I picked you a flower. My response, that’s not a flower it’s a weed. Immediately I felt the laser beam gaze of my wife and her encouragement to “take the flower.” *What did my 4 year old have that I didn’t? A heart of fascination at the beautify of our creator.*

*The world needs to see our us speechless at grace multiplied. The community needs to see us weep when one sinner turns to Christ. The county needs to see our hearts burst when we sing songs of mercy and grace. –Jesus Paid it All*

Do you need to regain your vision of the majesty of our Savior today? **Have you been walking through the fields of grace and grown tired of the merciful blooms of God’s provision?** Ask the Lord to slow down your pace, bring joy to your heart, and open your eyes to his daily wonders. *We need to be Mark 7:37 people.*

**Saying He has done all things well.** **Genesis 1:31** God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Its is no accident that the people said: Jesus does all things/makes all things good. Everything in creation was good until sin. Because of sin, you are not good. The more you realized the depth of your non-goodness, and the brokenness of our world (non-goodness) the more we proclaim He does all things well! This is the admiration of the Messiah—he does all things well. Here is the power of the Gospel:

**Phil 1:6** I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

When you by faith (human response) through grace enter into a relationship with the Father, at that moment he **begins to work in your life**. Not any work but a good work. However, because of deep sinful patterns and desires, you are still under construction. Have no fear, He will carry you to completion. *In Christ, you are His work—His good work.*

**The Kingdom** This marvelous picture of the Son of God tells us much about the Kingdom. The healing of the deaf and the loosening of the tongue was no ordinary miracle. This was a declaring that the Kingdom is now!

These are two of the elements in Isaiah's vision of the blessing which will result from God's own eschatological coming in **Isaiah 35: 5** Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. **6** Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy, for water will gush in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

The kingdom of God is not something you wait for and obtain when you die. Jesus ushered in a new kingdom. If you are putting up with Jesus as you wait for heaven, you will be extremely disappointed. **The streets of gold only shine because the light of Jesus. Jesus is the reward. The Kingdom is Now!**

**10** A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy (and he even delays). I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.

Everyone wants a full abundant life. **This perpetual pursuit is penned in the declaration of Independence that all men have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.** Your pursuit will never end until you find Jesus Christ.

Church the kingdom of God is now. His name is Jesus. Live as ones who are full of life because we live in the new kingdom. **We must make the invisible kingdom visible in our midst. John Calvin**

### What a Marvelous Messiah

## Conclusion

**Mark 7:14** Summoning the crowd again, he told them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand:

The healing of the deaf man reminds that whether Jew or Gentile, near or far, knowledgeable or unlearned, only Jesus can enable true hearing, seeing, understanding, and witness

*What if the man stopped Jesus from touching his ears and only wanted speech?* The Messiah knew the cause of his malady. Gospel: Design-Brokenness-Good News

Will you regain your wonder? **We are perishing or want of wonder, not for want of wonders -G.K. Chesterton** A malady- A miracle- and a marvelous messiah



# Notes

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This is only one of three stories in Mark that does not find a counterpart in the other synoptics

Mark 7:31 Again, leaving the region of Tyre, he went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of the Decapolis.

Jesus journey outside Galilee now leads him back to the Decapolis, the largely non-Jewish region to the east of the lake of Galilee, which was also the scene of the spectacular exorcism in 5:1-20 (NIGTC)

32 They brought to him a deaf man who had difficulty speaking and begged Jesus to lay his hand on him. 33 So he took him away from the crowd in private. After putting his fingers in the man's ears and spitting, he touched his tongue. 34 Looking up to heaven, he sighed deeply and said to him, "Ephphatha!" (that is, "Be opened!"). 35 Immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak clearly.

The incident, recorded only by Mark, is notable not only for its non-Jewish location, but also for the use of saliva for healing (8:23), for the recording of Jesus' Aramaic word of healing and for the addition of a further complain (deaf and dumb) to the list of those he already has healed (NIGTC).

## Deaf

Translated literally, the word implies someone with dull or severely impaired hearing (Mann, 323).

This particular man appears to have gone deaf later in life, for had he been born deaf and mute he would not have learned how to speak in the first place (BWIII, 234). This is the first occurrence of the healing of a deaf person in the Gospel of Mark.

## Dumb

Greek form is best understood as speech impediment. Some manuscripts describe the sufferer as having a harsh or hoarse manner of speaking, thus implying that the man was not wholly speechless (Mann, 323).

Mark uses a Greek word, *mogilalos*, that occurs only once elsewhere in the Bible. In Isaiah 35 we read of the revelation of the glory of the Lord to the nations. The healing of the dumb links our story unmistakably to the Isaiah quotation (Edwards, 224).

The regions of Tyre and Sidon are, of course, precisely the Lebanon of Isaiah 35.

## **Took Him away**

In removing him from the crowd, Jesus signifies that he is not simply a problem, or another face in the crowd, but a unique individual (Edwards, 225).

## **Saliva**

This would not have been as surprising in the ancient Mediterranean world as it is to us; there are several ancient accounts of the use of saliva especially to cure blindness (the famous story told by Tacitus of how a blind man was cured by the saliva of emperor Vespasian (NIGTC, 303).

Physical contact is clearly more appropriate in the case of a man who would be unable to hear spoken words (NIGTC).

Spittle was thought in both the Jewish and Greco-Roman world to have healing properties (BWIII, 234).

## **Ephphatha-Be Opened- singular**

The form in Mark is singular, it is formally addresses to the man (who ought not to be able to hear it!) rather than his ears, but in effect it is the ears which are commanded to function again (NIGTC).

Jesus, unlike some wonder-workers, is not using gibberish or unknown words or syllables to perform a healing, but rather his own intelligible native speech (BWIII).

He thereby declared that it would shortly come to pass, that those who were destitute of the revealed truth would both hear and understand the majestic words of God -- Lactantius

## **Immediately**

The effect is immediate. Mark employs vivid language to emphasize the function of the ears and the untying of the tongue (NIGTC).

## **Loosened**

The original Greek is vivid and concrete: the chain of his tongue was broken. In the NT, the word for chain most frequently means a chain or fetter that binds a prisoner. The breaking of the fetter by Jesus is a figure of liberation (Edwards, 226).

For the very architect of the body itself and artificer of all flesh had come personally to him, and with his gentle voice tenderly opened up his obstructed ears. Then his mouth which had been so closed up that it could not give birth to a word, gave birth to praise him who made its barrenness fruitful. The One who immediately had given to Adam speech without teaching, gave speech to him so that he could speak easily a language that is learned only with difficulty –Ephrem the Syrian

Deafened ears, of sound unconscious, every passage blocked and closed, at the word of Christ responding, all the portals open wide, hear with joy friendly voices and the softly whispered speech – Prudentius Hymns 9.

36 He ordered them to tell no one, but the more he ordered them, the more they proclaimed it.

Mark 7:37 They were extremely astonished and said, “He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

### **Extremely Astonished**

The crowd's reaction suggests that this was a particularly impressive form of healing (NIGTC). The astonishment of the crowd is here more dramatically expressed (including the hapax legomenon “extremely/completely”) and suggests that the healing of the deaf and dumb was a matter of particular amazement (NIGTC, 304).

Verbal form also found in the NT

Rom 5:20 The law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more

2 Cor 7:4 I am very frank with you; I have great pride in you. I am filled with encouragement; I am overflowing with joy in all our afflictions.

These are two of the elements in Isaiah's vision of the blessing which will result from God's own eschatological coming in Isaiah 35

- 5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
- 6 Then the lame will leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy,  
for water will gush in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;

### **Everything Well**

**Gen. 1:4** God saw that the light was good, 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. a Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

**Phil 1:6** I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

# Illustrations

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There is more grace in God's heart than there is sin in your past. Erwin Lutzer

# Application

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Jesus knew that the only lasting cure for physical ailments was not the temporary reprieve of a healing but