

Mark 7:31-37 Jesus Heals Our Hearts! Pentecost 16 Sept. 13, 2015

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Our God of grace and peace calls us to hear His promises in Christ that our hearts be certain in Him. Amen. We read of a wonderful miracle of Jesus in Mark 7:31-37

These are Your Words, heavenly Father, for us to hear from Your Word and take to heart. Your Word-truth!

Dear Christian Friends,

Today we read about a deaf man. It may be difficult for us to relate to him. We often take our hearing for granted unless we are hearing impaired from an ear infection or a hearing loss. When I lived in Florida long ago, I served a deaf couple. It was frustrating for me to try to communicate with them not knowing sign language and only writing messages slowly. How often must it have been frustrating for them when they couldn't read people's lips or have an interpreter to help them! I've read that less than 10% of deaf people say that Jesus is their Savior, due to no communication. But, we can hear! We know the Gospel that:

Jesus heals our hearts!

First, too many people's hearts are closed to Christ. Mark states, "*Some people brought to [Jesus] a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.*" (v.2) These friends of the man may have taken him earlier to magicians who claimed they could heal. But, they always had been disappointed. Since the territory Jesus was in had been mostly occupied by foreigners, many hadn't known of the coming Savior. They didn't know the prophecy from Isaiah that we read earlier that the Savior would open the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf. But thankfully, Jesus had been in the area earlier and had cast out demons from a man. This man, once healed, wanted to follow Jesus. But Jesus said, "*Go back to your family*" and tell them of "*the great things God has done for you.*" (Luke 8:39) He did tell them and now that Jesus had returned all kinds of people came with their sick, injured, or demon possessed so that He would heal them. (Matthew 15:30-31) Among those people was the deaf man. He hadn't been able to hear about Jesus' power to heal. His heart had no faith to receive blessings from God. But, His friends that brought him pleaded for Jesus' help.

We may wonder why Jesus went to all the trouble with this man. He led him away from the crowd, put His fingers in the man's ears, then touched His tongue, then He looked up to heaven while the man was concentrating on Him the whole time? Then Jesus finally spoke. (v. 33-34) Jesus was using a kind of sign language that the deaf man could understand. He used His fingers and His own saliva to show the man that He had the power to heal. He looked up to heaven in prayer and spoke so the man would connect Jesus to the God of heaven. The man saw Jesus' mouth move but then instantly the first voice he heard was Jesus'! The first word he heard was "*Ephphatha!*" (v.34) His hearing was restored instantly!

Jesus did all this because the man's problem wasn't just his hearing but his spiritual heart. The man needed faith not just to hear but to be saved from his sinful life that would put him in eternal isolation and suffering. Without hearing the Gospel it was impossible for him to know the truth. Some of you may be receiving email notes from Miss Heller. She talked about the language barriers that she has dealt with. She had a broken lock on one of her apartment doors. The manager came to her apartment, but he knew only Chinese and she knew only English. He kept repeating words to her getting louder and louder thinking that somehow his loud speaking could help her better understand. I don't know if the lock was ever fixed or not.

It is not just deaf people or people of another language who have a difficult time hearing of spiritual things. People who don't have faith in God get frustrated. They hear someone speak about Jesus or hear the Bible but it makes no sense to them. When Paul once tried to preach to some Jews who rejected the message of Jesus, he quoted the Prophet Isaiah, *"Go to this people and say, 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.' For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them."* (Acts 28:26-27) All people need healing in their hearts through faith. It's like a key that unlocks our minds to the saving truth of God. The Bible states, *"We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us."* (1 Corinthians 2:12) The Spirit is at work to this day.

Second, the Lord changes hearts. We can't be certain how many hearts were changed the day of the man's healing. The crowd praised him for healing, but we have to question their faith in Him as the Savior. On the other hand, Jesus' sign language had worked for the man who was deaf. Jesus had opened up a whole new world for him and just for hearing with his ears and speaking with his mouth.

Think of the contrast. The deaf man was more than ready to spend time with Jesus to learn more about this powerful one sent from God. But the crowd was too busy telling everyone about the miracle worker without giving another thought to Christ's message. Martin Luther commented: Where the Word of God has been difficult to hear or where there is persecution of people with God's Word, the believers highly value it. Where God's Word is available freely, people disregard it. They won't keep listening to it.

Even though Jesus has not healed our hearing, are we in awe of His power to save us? Jesus has taken us aside at the waters of baptism. He has brought us spiritual healing through His Word. Paul wrote, *"Faith comes by hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ."* (Romans 10:17) His Word has powerfully worked to heal our spiritual hearts and we live by faith.

It was wonderful that the deaf man's friends cared enough about him to bring him to Jesus. We also should thank God that parents or friends brought us to Christ to be blessed by Him in baptism. We pray that we'll do the same for others. With hearts filled with Christ's love, we want everyone to say, "Jesus died for me. He took my place as a sinner and paid the price of my sins so I won't be sent hell. Jesus has a place for me in heaven!" We should still be in awe just like crowd saying: *"[Jesus] has done everything well!"* (v. 37)

Jesus no longer bans us from speaking about the things He has done. But, that does mean that it is easy to communicate about Him. People can be distracted today just like the crowd with the deaf man. Jesus wants us to stay focused on His message. He came to heal hearts that are spiritually broken. Our hearts can hurt when we're under temptation, when we're ill, or when we are burdened with problems. No matter how many times we hear God's Word, we need more! His Word keeps our faith alive. We need time with Jesus and His Word just like the deaf man. We must not let unbelievers set the pattern for when we hear or don't hear God's Word. Paul wrote, *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* (Romans 12:2) So, we pray, "Lord, open now my heart to hear, and through Your Word to me draw near. Let me Your Word ev'r pure retain. Let me Your child and heir remain." (CW 282) Amen.