

JESUS HEALS A DEAF AND MUTE MAN

Mark 7:31-37 (Key Verse: 7:34)

He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!")

Deafness is the inability to hear and muteness the inability to speak words that can be understood by others. In today's passage, we learn of how Jesus remarkably made a deaf and mute man completely well. The man instantly knew how to speak a language and could clearly understand what was said to him. It is not by mistake that Jesus is presented with deaf and mute man. This is built up from the previous passage with the deafness and muteness of the religious leaders. Though they had ears they were deaf to Jesus' words. Though they could speak, they failed to teach Jesus as Lord and saviour. Are we listening to Jesus when he speaks to us through the bible? Are we spiritually mute to share the gospel with others? Just like hearing affects our speaking ability, for to be able to speak well we need to hear our own words well. Are we spending good time in studying the bible, the word of God? Are we really hearing what God's word is saying? It is my prayer that we may hear God's word and not be mute but Jesus' disciples. If we are deaf and mute, may Jesus open our ears to hear and make us speak today, Amen!

Look at verse 31, "Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis." Jesus had just moved from another Gentile region called Tyre into another region called Decapolis. The name Decapolis literally means 10 cities in Greek. One of those cities was the place where Jesus healed the man who had a legion of demons and used to live in the tombs. At that time Jesus sent the demons into the pigs and the herd of pigs died as a result. This made the people of that region very angry, they even asked Jesus to leave the town. However, we will recall that the man whom Jesus healed went away and testified all about what Jesus had done. We can now see the impact of his testimony because it is the people of that same region who are now bringing a man who was deaf and mute to Jesus for healing. Look at verse 32, "There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him." It is not clear whether this man was born this way, however, because he was deaf he could hardly speak because he could not hear what he would be speaking. He probably had a difficult and challenging life, you cannot hear and same time you are in essence mute. If he is crossing the road and there is a car coming behind him, he would not be able to hear the car even if the vehicle hooted. He had to be very good with his eyesight, always making sure he has clear view of his surroundings, so that he may be able to respond well to things that may be a threat to his life. To his benefit he had people who grew a caring heart, they brought him to Jesus. These people did not just bring this man to Jesus, they begged for something, they begged Jesus to place his hands on him. Having experienced or heard what Jesus did to the man who was demon possessed. They had faith in Jesus' healing power. And so they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

Let us see how Jesus responded and the sign languages he used to communicate what was happening for the man, let us all read verse 33-34, "After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. 34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!"). Firstly, Jesus took the man aside, away from the crowd. Why would Jesus do this? Why did not Jesus perform the healing right there in the middle of the crowd? Based on what Jesus did, it means it was necessary for the man be removed from the crowd, in order for God to work on his hearing and muteness situation. I don't think it was impossible for Jesus to heal this man while he was in the crowd. I think Jesus did this to teach us a principle. As long we live within a certain crowd of people in our lives, a crowd the Lord has been telling us to move away from, we will remain spiritually mute and deaf. We will continue to be in the hearing of the word of God, but it will have no effect in our lives, because we would be deaf to the word of God. We too won't even have the courage or ability to share the gospel of Jesus with others because we would be spiritually mute due to our deafness. We will be good at hearing all kinds of things of this world, and be able to speak all kinds of things with our mouths, soccer matches, politics, and all but fail to share the gospel truth that can free others from the power of sin.

Second, **Jesus placed his fingers into the man's ears.** Then he spat and touched the man's tongue. By putting his fingers inside the man's ears Jesus was communicating to the man that, I know your problem, it has to do with hearing. You are not a madman or insane. Also touching the man's tongue was a good gesture from Jesus, saying that I also know your other problem is speech. It is always wonderful when you go see a doctor and they know exactly what your problem is. Then you know that there is good chance your issue will be resolved. Unlike if the doctor is trying out certain things to see what will work. So as we know Jesus can give a command, he is the creator God, however for this man, for this man's sake, he places his fingers in in his ears and touches his tongue.

Thirdly, in verse 34 we read, **Jesus looked up to heaven,** now remember this man does have vision he can see what Jesus is doing. So Jesus looking up to heaven indicated to the man, that what was about to happen came from heaven. These people

understood and believed in all kinds of gods, and they knew these gods were above them coming from heaven. So Jesus looking up to heaven would indicate to this man that, God is involved in what is about to happen, It is not as a result of trickery or magic. It is God who is behind it all the way. Fourthly, while Jesus looked up to heaven, he signed. Now the fact that this man could not hear meant that he became very sharp in reading lips. This is what generally people who cannot hear become would have. They become good at reading facial gestures. What is the deep sigh then? It is an expression of deep sympathy, an expression of pain over the man's suffering and an expression of compassion, of tenderness, strong emotion showing that God is going to come down in power and give him his hearing and give him his speech because God is compassionate. And this is exactly what they man could perceive through his vision.

Let us all read verse 34-35 once more, "He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!"). At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly." Jesus then finally gave a command, Ephphatha! "be opened!" and immediately the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened. He began to speak plainly. The chains that held the man's tongue were loosened, and we also see something of great interest. The man began to speak plainly. I think this was two miracles on top of one another if not three. To hear is one thing. To be able to know what you're hearing, is language when you've never heard language is another miracle. There's no speech therapy here. He doesn't have to go to language class to learn Aramaic or Greek. He has full facility in the language that he's never heard. To hear it and understand it and speak it plainly. Then Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. I am not sure why Jesus keeps doing this, even the man with a legion of demons, it was after Jesus had told him not to tell, that the whole of Decapolis new about Jesus. Look at verse 37, "People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak." Jesus had done everything well, the deaf hear and the mute speak. Nothing is impossible with Jesus, he does everything well. This means he does everything perfectly, the deaf can hear and the mute can speak. What could this mean to us today?

What does it mean to be deaf and mute, though we may not be physically deaf or mute. We may be spiritually deaf and mute. We have to evaluate ourselves, whether we are listening to God or not. God is speaking to us through his word. Time and time and again, Jesus has been speaking to the Pharisees however, they remained deaf to Jesus words. And we learned in the previous passages that, it all had to do with the heart. Even the previous passage regarding the faith of the syro-phoenician woman. Though she was called a dog, she could be humble because she understood who Jesus was in her heart. Unlike the Pharisees she did not come to Jesus with a heart of a rock. She listened well to Jesus and could say, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall under the table. Whereas the Pharisees and teachers of the law had come to challenge Jesus and prove Jesus wrong. They then became deaf to Jesus teachings and even what they taught became of no power to help anyone spiritually. We shall see on our next week Sunday passage Jesus actually warns his disciples against the teachings of the pharisees.

May we not be spiritually mute but speak word of God with others. Now I am also speaking to myself here. We are not Sunday believers, but each day we are Jesus followers. May we daily listen to Jesus word and daily share his word. Jesus has demonstrated that he is the almighty God, who can make us hear instantly and instantly speak. He does all things well. Jesus is willing and compassionate, to remove our deafness and muteness far away from us. It saddens Him to see us deaf and mute. Let us continue to study the bible diligently, by taking our bible study time seriously. Let us also commit to testimony writing, so that God's word may truly remain in our hearts. It is the word of God that can truly soften our hearts. It does not matter how many times you beat yourself over a sin you are struggling to overcome, or a deafness or muteness behaviour you have. The power to overcome is Jesus, as we saw today. He said, "Ephphatha!" ("Be opened!") and immediately, deafness and muteness left the man. The man for the first time he could speak, could speak a language clearly and well. May we spend more time with the word of God, this is the best way to hear from Jesus and rid ourselves of muteness. And before you know it, you too will hear, "Ephphtha! "Be opened!" Amen!

In conclusion, we learned that Jesus is so compassionate and wants to release us of our deafness and muteness. Its truly God's desire that we hear his word clearly and can even share his word with others clearly. The deaf and mute man was brought to Jesus for healing and that is how he could experience the power of God to hear and speak clearly. We too can come to the hearing of Jesus words, when we study the bible diligently. This would require separating ourselves from certain crowds so that we are not distracted but can fully focus on God's word. I believe as we expose ourselves more and more to the word of God, we too will hear, "Ephphtha! "Be opened!" God will open our spiritual ears so that his word is planted in our hearts. And once planted in our hearts we can have faith to overcome sin and have power/courage to share the gospel with others. Jesus will do this very well in our lives, he does all things perfectly. Amen!