

Christ who Heals the Deaf.
Mark 7:24

Isaiah 35

Romans 10

Congregation Romans 8:1-11

For the past 2 weeks that we have spent here in chapter 7 there has been one clear message that I hope I was able to hammer home with our time here. That is, a moral life a christian does not make. Following an idea of morality, a list of rules and regulations does not make one a christian, but rather it is the new birth, the cleansing of the inside of the vessel which is an act of God, and God alone. And from that new clean inside flows all of the outward signs of that salvation, the works of the spirit that Paul listed in Galatians, love, peace, long suffering, kindness, gentleness, patience.

As we went through the first 23 verses here with Jesus dealing with these Pharisee's that had come to criticize him and his disciples we saw that right from the start Jesus rebuke of this understanding that they had of the mosaic laws and their traditions. And as we talked about, Jesus was not very nice to them, calling them hypocrites, fakers, and liars. This is not small issue, Jesus does not just agree to disagree but rather attacks them right to the heart pointing in the prophet Isaiah that he was talking about them when he said that they honor him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him.

This interaction that Jesus had with the pharisee's here is interesting for as we will see as we continue on here in chapter 7, Jesus leaves the Jewish region around the sea of Galilee and travels to Tyre and Sidon which is predominately a Gentile region. Here, these Jews, which have been given the law and the prophets, teaching them of the one who was to come reject him as a blasphemer, we see here in this morning's passage that these unclean, pagan gentile's actually accept Jesus as who he claimed to be. So let us turn this morning to Mark chapter 7, and read starting in verse 24-30.

We can only speculate why Jesus left the region around the sea of Galilee that he has spent all this time ministering to now turn and go to this gentile region. It would seem to suggest from the text here that he was seeking to get away, at least for a time. As we have seen Jesus has been running into increasingly more opposition everywhere he traveled. It started early on in the book, but in chapter 3 it has started to go from a mere curiosity, to now it is obvious something must be done about this Jesus. After Jesus healed the man with the withered arm in the synagogue on the sabbath in chapter 3, we see that this angered the pharisee's and they immediately went out to plot with the herodians how they might destroy him. Remember, the Pharisee's and herodians were not friends. It is believed that the herodians were a sect of the Jews who were loyal to Herod, the Roman Ruler. In every case the Pharisee's would be at odds with them, seeing them as apostates even but this shows their hatred, and desperation in their attempt to silence Jesus. So much so that they would seek to ally with ones they previously would have nothing to do with.

Earlier in Chapter 7 here we saw Jesus calling out the pharisee's for their hypocrisy, how they are appearing to hold to the traditions but have instead perverted them for their own selfish use and gain. And here in chapter 3, these Pharisee's who are complaining about Jesus and his Disciples not washing their hands before they eat, in the possibility that they have touched something unclean such as an item a Gentile touched in the marketplace, but we see them here plotting with Jewish Roman sympathizers. Those who they themselves would have considered to be unclean by their loyalty to the Pagan Gentile Ruler Herod. So even as far back as chapter 3, we already see their hypocrisy coming forth, showing their abject hatred toward Jesus.

And it continued, further in chapter 3 attributing the works that Christ was doing to being one who is possessed, or calling upon the power of beelzebub, the king of demons. Attributing the power of Satan to the works Jesus casting out demon's and healing the sick. By this point these guys were getting desperate and seekign any way to discredit him among the people. But as always, Jesus being God incarnate has the perfect answer turning their own arguments against themselves leaving them no ground to stand on.

Then in chapter 6 we see that he returns back to his home town, where he is rejected.. and even mocked as they insinuate that he is Mary's illegitimate child. Then here, in chapter 7 the pharisee's once again arrive on the scene seeking to cause problems. And not only just the problems of being ridiculed, and attacked by the pharisee's and his own family, there is the simple fact that everywhere he went a multitude of people followed. Even when he tried to get away, they still gathered and followed him. So it is no surprise, and I think it is a legitiment speculation as to why Jesus would head off to Tyre and Sidon as a way to escape for a time. We see this hinted in the first few verses, when Mark records that he went into a house and wanted no one to know. Also adding as a sort of further proof to this reasoning is that Jesus is never recorded as ministering or teaching as he is there. This brings up an interesting point that we will come back to in a bit.

So in this account we see here in our passage this morning, we see the 2nd recorded case of Jesus performing a miracle among the gentiles. The first one was after they had crossed the sea of galilee they were approached by the demoniac of Gadarene, where he cast out the demons and allowed them to enter into the heard of 2000 swine. To which the people who lived in that area, being afraid begged Jesus to leave. Now we see he is here in Tyre, seeking to be away from the crowds and multitudes to only be found by a woman whose daughter was demon possessed. Mark records here 25 that this woman had heard about him and had came begging at his feet that he might cast the demon out of her daughter. It is likely that she had heard about the demoniac at gadarene, for it was pretty infamous, that people from all around knew to avoid that area when traveling through. So this woman, had heard of Jesus and his ability to cast out unclean spirits and believed the stories that she had heard.

And this is the interesting point that I mentioned. Jesus had been teaching, ministering, and performing signs and wonders to the Jews, God's chosen people, who were given the laws, and the prophets, that fore told of the messiah to come, and they rejected him, and eventual schemed to have him killed. And here, we have a gentile woman, a pagan, who did not have the law, did not have the prophets telling of the coming messiah, coming to him to him begging him to heal her daughter believing what she had heard about him. Contrast this with the Pharisee's and scribes who were claiming that Jesus was doing all of this things by the power of Satan. This encounter that Jesus has with this woman stands in stark contrast with his encounters with the Pharisee's. The previous account revolved around Jewish men concerned about the law, and here we see a gentile woman who is without the law acting out of faith, something that these Jewish men earlier in the chapter lacked.

This account with this Gentile woman I find to be rather interesting. Jesus response to her request, and her continued faith. Jesus does not use the typical derogatory term here that the Jews often used toward the gentiles, but instead he refers to her as the little dogs. These are not the feral outside unclean dogs, but a reference to ones that would be kept as pets, in the house with the children. So with that understanding, it helps us to get a better grasp at her response, "Yes, Lord, even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs."

As James Edward's wrote, Her persistence is a testimony to her trust in the sufficiency and surplus of Jesus. His provision for the disciples and Israel will be abundant enough to provide for one such as herself. When the little dogs eat the crumbs from the table they are not robbing the children of their food, they simply eat what is there from the surplus of the children. Throughout the book of Mark Jesus has taught in parables, to which he says, those who have ears, let them hear. What we see her with this gentile woman is just that, she has heard Jesus parable of feeding the children, and she has understood it, God had granted her ears to hear and she responded in faith and said yes lord, but even the little dogs will eat scraps from the Lord's table.

When we read such things, and given what looks to have been a rather harsh response from Jesus toward her, we must remember that this account did not happen in a bubble, they were not the only 2 people in the house, but rather Jesus' disciples were also there with him. So we must ask ourselves, what lesson would Jesus have wanted his disciples to take away from this encounter? And infact I think that it was handled in such a manner as to teach a lesson specifically to his disciples. And that is, the same lesson he tried to teach earlier in the chapter. It is not what goes into a man that defiles him, but that which comes out. That food is not unclean, and neither are people. The idea that God's grace is given only to the Jews was a false assumption by the Jews, missing the point that God was teaching not about ethnicity, but about himself, his glory, and his sovereignty. You are either with God, or you are against him. If you are not one of God's people, then you are lost. It was not about being a physcal heir of Abraham, that was only a picture to teach the spiritual truth.

And we see that here with this gentile woman, who understood Jesus' parable, who had faith that he was Israel's promised Messiah, and she understood that even she, a gentile could eat from the masters table, if even only just the scraps it was more then sufficient. It is interesting that after Jesus would tell a parable.. his disciples would ask him to explain it and he would respond with amazement and comment on their being dull of hearing, and understanding. Yet here is a gentile, who has lived her entire life outside of the covenant, understanding Jesus, and coming to him in faith. Martin Luther commented saying “ This woman asked for no more than her due, She took Christ at his own words. He then treated her not as a dog, but as a true child of Israel.” This woman was not offered a separate gospel, we do not see the idea of different dispensations here that we talked about last week. It is not a promise of Salvation through the Law for one, and salvation by grace for another. But it is an understanding that it is a promise of salvation by grace to all, and all who are adopted by God and come to faith, both Jews and Gentiles are children of Abraham, the true Israel. I think this is the lesson that he wanted his disciples to learn from this encounter.

Now, picking back up here at verse 31 and continueing on we see a 2nd account that Jesus has on his excursion into the Gentile country. So lets read verse 31 through to the end of the chapter. This account of Jesus healing this man is only found here in the book of Mark. It is not found in any of the other gospels outside Matthews mention of Jesus healing great crowds of the blind and crippled, and many others. Last time Jesus was in this area around the Decopolis was when he cast the demons out of the demonic and into the swine. AT that time, they crowds there begged him to leave, but here we see that come flocking to him. This should be really no surprise for upon departing the region the man who had the demons begged that he may journey with Jesus and his disciples, but Jesus told him “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how he has had compassion on you.”

When we went through chapter 5, we talked about how this once demon possessed man became the first missionary to the Gentiles. Telling them of the man who came and had compassion and mercy on him saving him from his affliction. So when we see the crowds here respond toward Jesus in such a positive way instead of out of fear like they did previously it is likely because of the ministry of this man in the region. So now hearing that this Jesus has returned, they come to him bringing with them a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment. The word that Mark uses here for this man's speech is *mogilalos* which is only found in one other location in the bible. Which is Isaiah chapter 35 which is why we read that this morning. Mark's usage of this word links it directly here to Isaiah. The previous chapters in Isaiah were declaring God's judgement upon Edom, Egypt, Tyre, Israel, and Jerusalem, but here in chapter 35 it shifts from judgement to eschatology, and the joy not only of the redeemed but of all creation in the revelation of the Lord.

This is significant for Mark to include this in this gospel account to because first off of the tie in of the restoration of speech to the dumb, and the restoration of sight to the blind, and the ability for the deaf to hear signifying that this is the Day of the Lord, the arrival of the promised Messiah. But not only that, but it is also a fulfillment that the desert wastelands of Lebanon will receive the joy of God as well. That is what we are seeing here in the last half of chapter 7, These regions of Tyre and Sidon that Jesus is visiting, are the very places that Isaiah mentions. Jesus has gone to the gentiles in mercy and grace, and they are receiving him in faith with understanding. To quote Isaiah "This gentile Lebanon will join the ransomed of the Lord and enter Zion with singing."

In this latter half of chapter 7 we see that there are 2 miracles that Jesus performs that Mark has decided to focus on. We know that there were many others because Matthew says so but Mark has chosen to focus on these 2. In both of these miracles we see a stark difference in their administration. For the demon possessed girl, Jesus just simply tells the woman, because of her faith the demon is now gone. But in the case of healing the deaf man with a speech impediment Jesus used physical contact. So that begs the question why? It isn't as though it was necessary, we have seen Jesus perform other miracles just by his word, but we have also seen him use physical contact such as with the leper earlier in Mark. So we know that physical contact is not necessary for the administration of the miracle, so what is the purpose?

Well, there could be a couple of different reasons. Apparently it was believed by the Jews that the saliva from certain people could contain healing properties. It is possible that Jesus was doing so for the benefit of these gentiles here, knowing that Jesus was and his Disciples were Jews, not to mention such things were also common by Hellenistic, or Greek gentile healers as well. So it isn't as though this action had power, it is still the words of Christ that heals but it could have been done for the benefit of understanding for those who were there. Just as Jesus reached out and touched the leper in the midst of the crowd of Jews. Something that was unclean, something that not only was frowned upon, but was forbidden. And in that touch, communicates his compassion, and connection with that individual. Taking him from the crowd, and focusing his attention on him. He could have very well been healed just by touching the hem of his garment like the woman with the issue of blood was, it is once again not about the administration of the miracle, but rather about the one who performed it.

Taking this man aside, from this crowded mass of humanity just like he had done with all of the other miracles before, even the one with the woman touching the hem of his garment he did not let her go without personally identifying, and engaging her. I think this is a beautiful picture of the new birth and salvation. God having compassion on us, out of the mass of humanity, personally, a graciously working the miraculous healing of our rebellious and sinful hearts.

Each and every one of us have a different life, a different past, and a different new birth experience. Just like with these miracles, the administration of them may be different, some of us come from a back ground full of a sinful lifestyle, others rebellion against god may have been more cerebral, attempting to live morally and thinking themselves good but ultimately trusting themselves and not God. and then there are those who have been raised in a Christian home who have been taught the gospel from an early age who ultimately come to Christ. But in each of these it is the same, it is the word of God that breaks through and changes the heart. The leper, the lame, the blind, the demon possessed, the deaf, it does not matter their sickness they are all healed by Jesus, not by his touch, but by his words. And so it is the same with each of us today who are in Christ. Just like the administration of these miracles came in different ways, so to the word of God has come to each of us differently, some through our parents, some through friends, or the church, and even some through the internet ministries. but the mode is not really what is important, it is the word and the spirit that gives life.

In these accounts recorded here in chapter 7 I find it interesting that although there is a stark difference in the crowds between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews had every advantage, they had the law and the prophets talking about the coming messiah, the gentiles had neither. While having this advantage it did not seem to make them any more open to Jesus' ministry, but actually rather seemed instead to be a hindrance. AS Paul says about Israel in Romans he said that they pursued the law or righteousness but did not attain it because they did not seek it by faith but were instead relying on their works. And he goes on to say, that the gentiles who did not pursue righteousness obtained righteousness through faith. Just as I was saying last week, salvation is the same to the Jews and the to the gentiles, it always has been and always will be. It is and has been only through Jesus the Messiah, Abraham's seed, the one who was to come, and who has now come.

In verse 36 we see that Jesus once again commands the crowds to be silent and tell no one what they have seen. This is the 3rd time that we have seen this but each time it has produced the opposite effect. The more he commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it. Humanly speaking it is not hard to understand why they would proclaim what they had witnessed to their friends and families. We do the same when we see something incredible, or something that amazes us. Often times we can't wait to tell someone, and it can be hard to keep exciting things secret. So I find it very understandable that these who witnessed Jesus' miracles would be completely amazed and couldn't keep the secret. Spiritually speaking it would seem that Jesus' reasoning to tell them to be silent is because belief in the miracles that Jesus was performing does not produce saving faith. We have seen it time and time again, Mark alluding to these large multitudes of strangers who gather to witness a miracle, to be amazed, to see something they have never seen before. But out of these onlookers, we find a few that come to Jesus in faith, trusting him to heal them, trusting even in just his words.

In Marks theme of outsiders, and insiders, we see that neither group, the Jews or the Gentiles have an automatic in, or out. But rather it is those who hear, and those who believe as we have seen Jesus say multiple times now in before his parables, those have have ears, let them hear. Those who are able, listen up. And who are those who are able? Those who God has given the ability and understanding, just like this deaf man, Jesus reached out and opened his ears making him able to hear physically, God reaches out and opens our hearts and minds making us able to hear and understand his word. We even see Jesus disciples at times do not understand Jesus teaching until he takes them aside and opens their understanding.

So in closing, we see 3 main points in this chapter 7 of Mark. First off, that there really was no advantage to being a Jew when it comes to belief in Jesus, and in fact as we have seen the law and traditions were actually a stumbling block to them not understanding their true purpose and meaning and only seeing the physical aspects. Which brings us to the 2nd point, that faith comes by hearing. One must hear the word of God to believe it. Jesus came teaching that salvation is by faith alone, and not of works. You can not work your way to righteousness by abiding to a moral code, or law as the Jews believed, but rather it is faith in Christ and through the graciously given new birth. Which brings us to the 3rd and final point. This new birth, and the ability to not just physically hear God's word, but to hear and believe is granted by God alone. He alone opens our ears to hear, and our eyes to see and understand.

The new birth, salvation is just as mysterious, and just as miraculous as these miracles that we have been reading about here. And it is a work of God, and God alone, by enabling us to hear his word and believe so that we understand and turn from our sin and rebellion and follow him. Praise to be God for his gracious mercy and love toward us that why we were yet dead in sin, why we were enemies of God, Christ died for us, in our place so that we may be reconciled to God the Father through the righteousness of Jesus Christ his Son.