

## The Deaf-Mute.

Text: Mark 7:31-37

Suggested Hymns:

Tan: 413, 463, 412 (T345), 452, 408

1) The afflicted man

2) The divine Helper

3) The astonished multitude

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Mark 7:31-37, <sup>31</sup> *Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee.* <sup>32</sup> *Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him.* <sup>33</sup> *And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue.* <sup>34</sup> *Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."* <sup>35</sup> *Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly.* <sup>36</sup> *Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it.* <sup>37</sup> *And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In his sermon in the house of Cornelius, Peter said that Jesus *went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.*<sup>1</sup> Such was the life of our Saviour in the days of His flesh.

Our text pictures Jesus in this merciful activity going about *doing good*. He had come from the borders of Tyre and Sidon, where He had healed the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, and now He came back to the Sea of Galilee, passing through the midst of the region of Decapolis, a confederation of ten cities.

There Jesus healed a man who was deaf and was unable to speak properly. These miracles of Christ teach us what a heart full of love and compassion He

had towards suffering, sinful mankind. This we are to keep constantly before our eyes and in our hearts, so as to grow in our faith and trust in Him.

This story of the healing of the deaf-mute is one of the most touching in the gospels. It shows us human suffering and misery in one of its worst forms and, at the same time, our Lord's power and compassion. Let us therefore consider, the afflicted man, the divine Helper and the astonished multitude. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Afflicted Man**

From Tyre Jesus and His disciples journeyed north to Sidon, then east and south toward the Sea of Galilee, and then to the region of Decapolis. It was the area east of the Jordan River and south-east of the Sea of Galilee.

Decapolis was a region of Greek culture, and therefore predominantly Gentile. Our Lord performed many miracles in Decapolis and also preached the Word there. He again showed that Gentiles were not excluded from the kingdom of God.

Jesus had been in Decapolis once before.<sup>2</sup> That time the people had asked Jesus to leave when they suffered the loss of a herd of pigs. But the demon-possessed man whom Jesus healed had gone throughout the area proclaiming Jesus' power and mercy. When Jesus returned, crowds gathered and brought their sick to Jesus.<sup>3</sup> This is where we meet the deaf and mute man in today's text.

Nothing touches our sympathy and compassion more than bodily misery and suffering. In this case the affliction was twofold. Two organs were virtually wanting, two senses sealed, two channels of communication with the outside world closed. How great was this double deprivation!

It is difficult for those whom God has blessed with the free use of all their bodily organs to appreciate the condition of a person who is deaf and could not speak. Hearing, like sight, is an inborn faculty. A person learns to speak by hearing, but how can a person learn without hearing? When the ear is deaf, silence seals the tongue.

What is the lot of these "*children of silence*," as they have been called? They are excluded from all those pleasures which the ear drinks in and the tongue

gives out. They remain strangers to the melody of sweet sounds, the thrilling tones of harmony, the delights of music, the singing of birds, the thousand voices in the open air of heaven.

Still more, they are excluded from the pleasant voice of childish prattle, from friendly talks and joking, from intellectual exchange of thought, from the sound of voices near and dear to them, of father and mother, brothers and sisters. From all this they are shut out.

And here we come perhaps to the worst phase of their condition — the blank it leaves in the mind. The exclusion of sound is the exclusion of all that knowledge which sounds convey and suggest to the mind. In some respects the condition of the deaf-mute is worse than that of the blind.

Indeed, to the latter the beauty of nature is shrouded in darkness, their eyes are not gladdened by the light of the sun and by the starry heaven at night. Also hidden from them is the beauty of the human countenance and the loveliness of the landscape scenery while “the shadow of death” rests upon their eyelids.

Yet, you can read to him, and in modern times the blind are taught to learn to read by touch, the touch of their fingers. They are thus able to lay up a store of knowledge and be in communication with others. Audio tapes and CD’s are also available, but not so with the deaf-mute.

Even though in recent times great advances have been made, and wonderful achievements attained in the improvement of the condition of deaf-mutes, still one of the great inlets of knowledge is taken away from him. One of the main sources of enjoyment is sealed to him. One of the chief links in communication is snapped. The deaf-mute stands apart in lonely isolation from his fellow-men. Such a man was brought to the Lord, as it is written here, ***Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech.***

## **2. The Divine Helper**

We are told in our text, Jesus came *to the Sea of Galilee*. He came to the place where this afflicted man was. How significant it is that Jesus came to this man who needed help! He came down from heaven to earth because we needed such a Helper, such a Saviour. He still comes to help those who need Him.

How significant and instructive is Jesus' way and His manner of healing! When you compare other healings by the Saviour you will notice that each one is different. Jesus is the wise Physician. He knows everybody's condition, disposition, and ailments, as well as how to treat each one. In this case, as well as in other cases, Jesus did not only want to heal the bodily ailments, but He also wished to arouse faith in the heart and thus bring about healing of body and soul.

For this purpose Jesus took the deaf-mute *aside from the multitude*. This was done to fix the patient's attention solely upon Christ. How many people are in this way taken aside by the Saviour in sickness, bereavement and losses! The affairs of this world bring about distraction and make us insensible to our eternal needs, which Jesus alone can supply. Therefore God "*takes them aside*."

After taking the deaf-mute aside, Jesus *put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue*. By these signs Jesus intended to make the patient aware of his ailments; but they were also significant of what Jesus was about to do.

They did in no way contribute to the cure. They were done solely in order to get the man's attention and to arouse his expectations. He knew nothing of the language of sounds, so the Lord addressed him by the language of signs. Jesus put His fingers into the man's ears in order to show him the cause of his infirmity and to signify that Jesus would open the way for sound to enter.

Jesus touched the tongue with moisture from His own mouth to loosen whatever impediment confined it. Thus these signs gave the man some indication of what Jesus was to do. But at the same time they were to teach him another lesson, the lesson of faith in our Lord Himself as the Source from which this healing power flowed.

But other and different symbolic actions followed these signs. The Saviour turned His eyes to heaven. Why? He turns the mind of the deaf-mute from the signs, as though by themselves they were in any way bringing about his cure. Jesus raises His thoughts to heaven, to remind the man that all relief was to be looked for from God, and that, as the Lord from heaven, Jesus Himself had brought that power down to earth.

Jesus then *sighed*, and no wonder when He thought of the ruin sin had wrought. The Saviour sighed when He looked abroad on suffering humanity,

when He reflected on the misery of a fallen race, looking at the misery in the afflicted man.

Jesus sighed in sympathy with our sufferings. <sup>15</sup> *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses*<sup>4</sup> or infirmities Scripture tells us in Hebrews. Jesus sighed in sorrow for our sins. In them He saw the cause on everybody. In them He saw the terrible source of so much woe. In them He saw the fearful thing that darkened heaven above us and opened hell beneath us. He saw the cursed earth on which we walk. In them He saw that terrible infection that has disordered all the members of the body and all the faculties of the soul.

In them He saw all the ills that flesh is heir to, as we read in Romans 5:12, <sup>12</sup> *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men.* And not only death, but with it all our woe. In them He saw the grievous load He was Himself to bear. He sighed when He thought of the works of the devil and his malice against man and how sin had given him power to deform the body by disease and ruin the image of the Creator in the soul of the creature.

Perhaps, too, He sighed when, He saw the new temptation to sin for the man soon to be cured — the evil things the ears would hear, the idle things the tongue would speak, the wicked things in which both organs might be made instrumental.

<sup>34</sup> *Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”* One word only the Saviour spoke, and no sooner was this spoken than a threefold miracle was wrought. <sup>35</sup> *Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly.* How wonderful it must have been for the man when the sweet music of human voices penetrated his ears! He must have felt as though he was in a new world and that a new life had entered his soul.

His tongue was freed completely from whatever had restrain it, and his speech was immediately perfect. He could now tell to everybody around him the perfect nature of his cure, the joy that filled his soul, the gratitude that glowed in his heart and which then flowed from his lips.

Here we have the perfect Saviour, able to save and willing to save. Almighty in love and with compassion curing all ills and woes. He was indeed the promised Messiah, who had come into the world to destroy the works of Satan. No wonder the multitude was astonished beyond measure at the power shown by the Lord.

Our text continues, *Then He commanded them that they should tell no one.* Jesus commanded the people not to tell anyone because the Jewish people of His day had a totally false, political conception of the coming Messiah. Christ made it clear that He had not come into this predominantly Gentile territory to organise a political rebellion. Jesus had come on earth to lay down His life as a payment for the sins of the world. He was determined to let nothing compromise the purpose for which He had come.

Today the command not to tell anyone no longer applies. In fact, this is one of the great miracles of our Lord which we are to proclaim so that others too may see the divine power and love of the Saviour and turn to Him for all blessings, both temporal and spiritual.

### 3. The Astonished Multitude

Astonished beyond measure, the multitude said, *“He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”*

We need not wonder at these words of the people and the powerful impression made on their minds. They had seen wonderful things. Blessed were indeed the eyes that saw such things, who saw not only outwardly the marvellous works of the Lord, but saw in them what John did when he says, *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

They truthfully exclaimed, *He has done all things well.* He had done well to the man who was healed because almost new life was given to him. Jesus had done well to this man’s family, for what a burden had he been to them until now! It was well for mankind that the Son of God came into the world to save and to heal. It is well for us also because these miracles of Jesus prove that He is able and willing to help in all kinds of need and suffering.

Even here on earth, in this life, believers, when looking back over the Saviour's dealings with them, are able to see how graciously He has led them in removing their ailments, restoring their souls, and they rejoice in His wisdom and love.

Review and count, the blessings which you have received. Listen to the words of Psalm 103:1-2, *Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!* <sup>2</sup> *Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits.*

But what will it be in eternity when in the light of glory the Lord's ways and works with His believers here on earth will be made manifest to them - when in all His doings His wonderful power, wisdom, and love will be revealed to them - when all the riddles of our earthly pilgrimage will be solved and we shall clearly see how true it was that all things work together for good to those who love God!

Then, indeed, all the multitude of ransomed saints will exclaim with blissful hearts and exulting voices, *He has done all things well.* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 10:38

<sup>2</sup> Mark 5:20

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 15:30 and Mark 7:33

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 4:15