

#1792
Cf. #217

Mark 7:31-37¹
Jesus heals a deaf man
who can hardly speak.
16th Sunday after Pentecost
Supplementary Lectionary
Series "B," Gospels

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Grace WELS Durand MI
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SS & SABC begin
Scholarship Fund
SS Rally Day & Potluck

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. ³² There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.

³³ 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!"). ³⁵ At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak plainly.

³⁶ Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he commanded them, the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷ People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!"

JESUS SYMPATHIZES WITH YOUR INCAPACITIES
I. YOUR PHYSICAL INCAPACITIES
II. YOUR SPIRITUAL INCAPACITY

In the Name of Jesus who takes away all our sins and heals all our diseases, Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

You may recall from past sermons that Jesus' popularity had spread. After his feeding of more than 5,000 people with five barley loaves and two small fish, the people wanted to make Jesus their king (cf. John 6; Mark 6:30-44). They thought that Jesus would give them everything they desired in this world, and that they would not have to worry or work anymore. Jesus, of course, had not come into the world to be that kind of king. So, sometime after the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus went north into "the vicinity of Tyre (cf. 7:24). "Then," our text tells us, "Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis" (7:31). Both Tyre and Sidon were Mediterranean seaports and pagan areas.

Jesus wanted to get away from the crowds and take the time to teach his disciples privately that is why he went through Tyre and Sidon. Then Jesus headed back south into the area of Galilee, but he kept to the east side and went further south into the Decapolis – which

¹ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

means “Ten Cities.” This area was south and east of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus wanted to continue to teach his disciples privately. But the people of the region heard that Jesus was in the area and flocked to him for help. During this time, the incident described in our text takes place.

“Some people brought to [Jesus] a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged [Jesus] to place his hand on the man” (7:32). The people wanted Jesus to heal this poor, deaf-mute man. As you see Jesus do this, you also come to realize that JESUS SYMPATHIZES WITH YOUR INCAPACITIES. JESUS SYMPATHIZES WITH YOUR INCAPACITIES ... I. YOUR PHYSICAL INCAPACITIES; and, II. YOUR SPIRITUAL INCAPACITY.

JESUS SYMPATHIZES WITH YOUR INCAPACITIES I. YOUR PHYSICAL INCAPACITIES

This man was a deaf-mute. He could not hear. He could barely talk – probably only making, for the most part, indecipherable sounds. The people who brought this man to Jesus had heard about Jesus’ preaching, teaching and miracles. They knew that Jesus would be able to help this man. As Jesus deals with this deaf-mute, you see Jesus’ sympathy for him.

Jesus takes the man aside from the crowd. He wants to deal with this man individually; this shows Jesus’ sympathy for him. Jesus focuses on this man, and the man focuses on Jesus. Jesus puts his fingers into the man’s ears, indicating Jesus has sympathy with his lack of hearing and that he is going to do something about his hearing. Jesus spits and touches the man’s tongue. He has sympathy with the man’s inability to speak, and he is going to do something about this man’s speech. Jesus looks up to heaven, indicating that heaven has sympathy for this man and that the help this man was about to receive came from above. Jesus sighs deeply. Jesus’ sigh again indicates his sympathy for this man, for indeed, this man must have sighed often in his life as he inadequately tried to communicate with others. Then Jesus said the word, “*Ephphatha!*” (which means, ‘Be opened!’”) (7:34b). Immediately the man could hear and speak plainly.

APPROPRIATION

Jesus had sympathy for this deaf-mute man. Jesus healed this deaf-mute man. In his Word, God also expresses his sympathy for you and gives to you promises of healing.

King David writes in Psalm 103,

***¹ Praise the LORD, O my soul;
all my inmost being,
praise his Holy Name.
² Praise the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—***

**³ who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases** (Psalm 103:1-3).

King David expresses the thought that not only does the LORD forgive all your sins but he also heals all of your diseases. That would include all of your incapacities like this deaf-mute man had; as well as all of your other sicknesses, ailments and illnesses. Other Scriptures proclaim this same truth.

Isaiah writes concerning Jesus, the Suffering Servant, “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4a). Referring to that same Old Testament Bible passage, Matthew records a particular point in Jesus’ ministry that ...

¹⁶ When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to [Jesus], and he drove out the spirits with a Word and healed all the sick. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the Prophet Isaiah:

**“He took up our infirmities
and carried our diseases”**
(Matthew 8:16&17; cf. Isaiah 53:4a).

Notice that Matthew includes in the “sorrows” spoken about by Isaiah, the incapacities of “diseases.” Jesus has sympathy for those in distress. Jesus has sympathy for you.

Jesus sympathizes with your pain, disease, illness, suffering, incapacity. Not only does Jesus know about these, he sympathizes with you regarding them. Yet here, in this life, you still have many diseases and illnesses; you still have incapacities; you still have pain and suffering. Yes, sometimes Jesus does bless the efforts of the medical community in dealing with these distresses for you. Sometimes Jesus still works miracles of healing without any explanation that the medical community can give. But, sometimes Jesus does not.

If Jesus does sympathize with you and with your various weaknesses, why does he not take away these incapacities from you? Why does he not “make it all better?” The Apostle Paul wondered about this, because the Apostle Paul had some sort of incapacity and weakness that afflicted him.

St. Paul writes, “Three times I pleaded with the LORD to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’” (2 Corinthians 12:8,9a). Some how and some way, God’s grace is expressed in everything that happens to you, for his Word assures you, “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God – those who are called according to his purpose” (cf. Romans 8:28).

God’s purpose in calling you – calling you to faith in Jesus as your Savior – God’s purpose in calling you, is to give you salvation and eternal life with him in heaven. Everything that happens to you – even the tribulations, troubles, turmoils, sicknesses, illnesses, diseases

and incapacities – all these things are governed by God’s grace for you – his undeserved love for you. At the same time, God will keep his Word that he spoke through King David in Psalm 103 – God will heal all your diseases (cf. Psalm 103:3b). For Jesus also deals with your spiritual incapacity.

JESUS SYMPATHIZES WITH YOUR INCAPACITIES II. YOUR SPIRITUAL INCAPACITY

You saw how Jesus’ sympathy for this deaf-mute was expressed. Jesus took the man aside individually – Jesus did not deal with him from a distance or even within the crowd. Jesus continued to deal with the man individually and sympathetically as he placed his fingers in the deaf-mute’s ears; as he spit and touched the deaf-mute’s tongue; as he looked up to heaven and sighed. Healing for this deaf-mute would come from heaven. Healing for this deaf-mute’s spiritual incapacity would also come from heaven – in fact, was even now coming from heaven, for Jesus, this man’s Savior and Redeemer, was from heaven, was here personally dealing with him.

Remember the connection between Jesus’ miracles and his preaching and teaching? Jesus’ miracles verified that his preaching and teaching were true. Jesus had come to earn the forgiveness of sins for this deaf-mute and to give him eternal life. That is one of the reasons that Jesus had gone away from the crowd after feeding the 5,000. That is one of the reasons that Jesus had gone north into the pagan areas of Tyre and Sidon, along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. That is one of the reasons that Jesus was now southeast of the populated area of Galilee – into the Decapolis – the region of the ten cities – a less populated area. The crowds wanted Jesus for their Bread and Health King. That desire of the crowds would interfere with Jesus’ work of redemption.

Jesus came into the world in order to save the world (cf. John 3:17). Jesus came into the world in order to pay the ransom price of his own holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death on the cross – the ransom price for the sins of all people. Jesus would redeem all people from sin, death and hell. Even the crowd gathered around Jesus did not understand this.

Mark records in our text,

³⁶ Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he commanded them, the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷ People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!” (7:36,37).

Here again we see that the people wanted Jesus to continue to heal and provide for them physically. Jesus, however, had come into the world to redeem them and give them eternal life and salvation. Indeed, the crowd was right about one thing. They said, “[Jesus] has done everything well!” They may not have realized it, but Jesus did do

everything well to gain eternal life for them in heaven. They were amazed. They would be even more amazed when, after his suffering and death on the cross, Jesus arose from the dead.

APPROPRIATION

You also have your physical ailments and incapacities – your aches and pains and suffering. More significantly, you have spiritual incapacity. Jesus has come to deal with that.

All of your aches and pains and suffering are ultimately caused by sin – your sinful condition – your sinful incapacity. Oh, your aches, pains and suffering, may not be related to any specific sin of which you are guilty. But your incapacities, whatever they may be, are the result of your sinful condition. This is the case for all people. But Jesus has sympathized with your sinful and spiritual incapacity.

Jesus took your sinful and spiritual incapacity upon himself. St. Paul reminds you of this truth when he writes, “God made [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for [you], so that in him [you] might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Think of that! God made his perfect and holy Son to be “sin” for you – for you and for the entire world and for me. In carrying your sin, Jesus also suffered the aches and pains that you feel in your daily lives. “Surely, he took up [your] infirmities and carried [your] diseases” (cf. Matthew 8:17b; cf. Isaiah 53:4a). Jesus sympathizes with you, because he has gone through the same suffering which you go through. All of these aches, pains and sufferings eventually lead to death. Jesus suffered that death for you too.

Jesus endured an eternity of death and suffering and punishment for you. Jesus endured this on the cross. Jesus testified to this truth when from the cross he cried out: “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34b; cf. Psalm 22:1). The benefit of what Jesus did for you, you have by faith in him alone as your Savior.

Remember that Jesus opened the deaf-mute’s ears and unloosed his tongue. Jesus has opened your ears to the Gospel. The Gospel is the Good News of the forgiveness of sins Jesus earned for you. Jesus, along with the Father, has sent to you the Holy Spirit in the Gospel (cf. John 14:15; 15:26); the Holy Spirit has brought you to faith in Jesus and, through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit has strengthened that faith in you. Jesus has made you a child of God the Father through the Gospel in Holy Baptism – you are now a child of God and an inheritor with Jesus of eternal life in heaven (cf. Romans 8:15-18; Galatians 3:26,27,29; 4:4-7).

Jesus touched the tongue of the deaf-mute in our text. Jesus touches your tongue with his own true body and true blood in Holy Communion, assuring you again and again of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life that you have by faith alone in him.

When Jesus loosened the tongue of this deaf-mute, the deaf-mute spoke clearly. Jesus has also loosened your tongue so that you can proclaim clearly the Good News of his salvation to others. Finally, Jesus has promised to take you to heaven where there will

be no more aches or pains or sufferings (cf. Revelation 7:16,17; 21:4). There in heaven, there will be only joy and praise as you give thanks to God for your LORD Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Jesus knows your every need and your every weakness. Jesus knows your incapacities, illnesses, diseases, aches, pains and sufferings. Jesus sympathizes with you; he too endured all of these things for you. Jesus took all of these things plus your sins and your sinfulness on himself and suffered for you – in your place, as your substitute. Jesus has covered over and taken away your sin. By faith alone in Jesus, there will be for you no more tears, crying or pain, for Jesus is your Savior and will take you to heaven. Amen.