

Be Opened

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Date: 05 June 2022

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[0 : 00] This is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us.

We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here, not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we've become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. You'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus and His life and His death and His resurrection. And as we go through this Gospel, we're asking two questions.

First, who is Jesus? And second, how do we respond to Him? And these are questions not that we impose from the outside on the text, but they're questions from the inside that come out of the text. Last week, we asked this question of what does great faith look like? And we saw that great faith includes the persistence that we saw from the Syrophenician woman and also the humility that she demonstrated, her understanding of God's grace.

[1 : 11] This week, we're going to ask a related question, which is how do we get that type of faith? How do we get that type of faith? It's with that that we turn now to God's Word.

I invite you to turn with me to Mark 7, verse 31. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn in your Bible. You can turn on your phone. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word.

And God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold. And it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. Which is why we read now Mark 7, verse 31.

Then He returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee in the region of the Decapolis. And they brought to Him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment. And they begged Him to lay His hand on him. And taking Him aside from the crowd privately, He put His fingers into His ears. And after spitting, touched His tongue.

[2 : 14] And looking up to heaven, He sighed and said to Him, Verse 36, And Jesus charged them to tell no one.

But the more He charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in heaven, we praise You again for Your goodness in speaking to us.

We're reminded of Your words in Matthew chapter 11. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give You rest. And so we ask for that rest this morning, that You would open up Your Word to us, that we would be able to understand it clearly, that we would see our need for Your grace, for Your miraculous work in our lives, and we would also understand and see how You meet us at that very same place.

Most of all, we ask that You would help us to see Jesus, that You would shine a spotlight on Him for us, that we would see Him clearly, that we would love Him, that we would worship Him, that we would obey Him.

[3 : 45] We thank You that we don't have to worry about whether we've earned these things or deserve them, but instead we simply ask them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. In

his book, *The Good American*, Robert Kaplan tells the story of a man named Bob Gersani, and Bob, the subtitle of the book is *The U.S. Government's Greatest Humanitarian*.

And the reason he gives him this exceptional title is that Bob had this incredible influence throughout his life working for both USAID and the State Department. He gathered information and he made recommendations that affected world events, public policy decisions, made their way all the way up to U.S. presidents, especially during the Cold War.

Of course, we could probably find many people who've done exceptional things. What was surprising about Bob was the fact that he was unexpected and unequipped. He'd had incredible learning disabilities, and so he was unable to finish high school.

I believe he dropped out around the 10th grade. And he was running in these circles that were filled with people who had graduated not just from college, but from elite colleges and universities. He was way in over his depth from a worldly perspective.

He was someone who was traveling in third world countries, often separated from communication for weeks at a time, and yet had a very sensitive stomach. And so you can imagine the sort of things that that brought on him.

[5 : 13] In addition to that, he was in many ways emotionally fragile. And yet, despite all of his handicaps, all the things that held him back, he was able to have this incredible career all around the globe.

Why? Well, Bob had a few secret superpowers, and one of them was this. He had this incredible ability to work with people and connect with them.

He was able to exceed all the things we might expect because he understood things that no one else did. He would go and interview dozens, if not hundreds, of people in different countries so that he could have access to information that no one else in the State Department had.

He would sit with them for hours. He knew exactly how to build rapport, and he knew, more than anything, how to be a great listener. That was the superpower that allowed him to punch so far above his weight.

He didn't judge people based on their education. In fact, he commented that often, it was those who were uneducated that he found intelligent and full of information. During his interviews, he developed these techniques that he would use to be able to learn as much as he could.

[6 : 22] One of them was he insisted on privacy with everyone he interviewed. If possible, it was just him and the person and maybe a translator so that he could build trust with them and get the information that he needed.

Now, he also had this other trick that I found fascinating, that as he worked with these individuals, most of the time, he didn't speak the same language that they did. And so he had to use these translators to communicate.

And he had something that I would never have thought of, which is that he wanted to make sure the person he was talking to trusted the translator. Well, how can you make sure that someone trusts a translator when you don't speak their language?

He would do it by sign language. And so he would ask questions like this. What was the first thing that you heard? And then he would tug his ear so that when they heard the translator say it, they would know that it was an accurate translation.

And he would say, what was the next thing that you saw? And he would pull at his eye so that they would know the translator was saying the right thing. He might talk about that person running and he would pump his arms so they would know that what was coming across was accurate.

[7 : 25] Because of that, because of his skill, because of his care for people and building their trust and rapport with them, despite all his handicaps, this man was able to affect the course of world events.

It was because of his care for people and his sensitivity with people that he was able to do things that other people with greater skills, perhaps in education, were not able to accomplish.

It's that tremendous skill with people that we observe with Jesus here in this passage. As we pick up in verse 31, he's continuing his tour of the Gentile area that we saw last week when he was in the region of Tyre and Sidon.

He goes north to Sidon, which is also a Gentile area, and then heads to the area of the Decapolis, which may sound familiar if you were with us when we were in chapter five, because that was the section where he met that man who had an unclean spirit.

And you'll recall in that story, the spirit said, I'm not just one, I'm legion, there's many of me. And Jesus allows the spirits to go into the pigs that run down into the water.

[8 : 31] The end of that story is when then Jesus tells that man to go and tell his town how he was healed. And if you remember, he is an overachiever. He doesn't just tell his town, he tells the entire Decapolis.

He goes throughout the entire 10 city region, making sure everyone knows how Jesus healed him. It should not surprise us then that as Jesus returns to that area, this story has had an effect. People in that region know what Jesus has done in the past and what he's capable of in the present, which is why this group, verse 32, brings to Jesus a man who's deaf and had a speech impediment.

Jesus' response here is to use the same tactics that we just talked about with Bob Gersani, his tactics of building this trust and this rapport with this individual.

First, we see verse 33, Jesus cares about being in privacy with this man. He takes him off by himself away from the crowd. This helps us understand that Jesus is not interested in putting on a show.

[9 : 39] Instead, he wants to meet this man in his humanity without any tricks or gimmicks. Jesus is meeting this man not as an attempt to show his power off to a great crowd, but instead to minister to this man personally and specifically.

It's not just that, though. He also uses sign language with this man. Remember, this is someone who cannot hear, and so that answers the question of why we haven't seen Jesus use this method of healing before.

He hasn't had to. Those he's healed in the past have been able to hear and understand what Jesus is doing here. Jesus, though, knows that this man is going to need more, and so he acts out with his hands the miracle he's about to perform.

We see him in verse 33. He puts his fingers into his ears, which is his way of saying, you know, these ears are stopped right now. I'm going to unstop them. He puts his finger onto his tongue, which is his way of saying, I'm about to fix your speech.

And so don't miss what Jesus is doing here. Jesus cares so much about this man, he is not another number to be touched and healed. This is a man that Jesus is meeting personally, making sure that he communicates in a way that he can understand.

[11 : 12] And in case we get pulled off track, I want you to know the power here is not in Jesus' actions. He is not performing some sort of magic trick in the touching of the ears and the tongue, and we know that for a couple reasons.

First of all, Jesus has not had to do this before. We haven't seen Jesus do these other things in his prior healings. Also, we know it because of verse 34, which tells us what actually happens.

Jesus looks up to heaven, which is a sign of his reliance on God, his Father. The last time we saw Jesus look up to heaven was when he prayed to bless the food at the feeding of the 5,000.

And then it's his command, this *ethvatha*, this order to be opened, that's what results in the healing. In other words, Jesus is doing whatever he can to draw close to this man.

He's doing everything he can to take down the barriers that separate him from someone who cannot hear communication and cannot give communication. This is an individual who is locked away in his own reality, cut off from the world in many ways.

[12 : 14] If you're anything like me, as you've grown older and as you've watched others age, you've learned that there are two kinds of doctors in this world.

There's the first kind of doctor who cares a lot about making money. There's the second kind of doctor who cares a lot about you.

Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not here to rag on doctors. We could say this about all sorts of professions. You could say it about pastors if you wanted to. But I bring up doctors here because we have seen Jesus before as the great physician.

There's the doctor who wants to get you in and out. He's not careful to look at your records or your sheets and know what's happened in the past. He's not bothered to spend too much time talking to you because he's already seen it before.

And before he talks to you, he knows what he's going to prescribe. Then there's the doctor who cares deeply about you. He wants to understand exactly what your experience has been like, what's unique about the struggles that you are facing and the way that he can help you the best.

[13 : 26] For him, you are not another number. He's not trying to get you in and out so that your copay hits as fast as possible. Brothers and sisters, Mark chapter 7 verses 31 through 37 is telling us that Jesus is the second kind of doctor.

Jesus is not here because you are another number in his system. He is not interested in this man for what he can gain by him in showing a display to the crowds of his power.

No, Jesus is interested specifically and individually in this man. Jesus in his healing and his salvation is specifically, individually interested in you.

Jesus is the doctor who cares deeply about each and every one of his patients. And in case we were in any doubt, we see in verse 34, not only does Jesus look up to heaven relying on the power of his Father, we also see that he sighs.

When Jesus sighs in the Gospels, it is a sign of his grief and frustration and anger at the brokenness of the world.

[14 : 52] It is a sign of how upset he is about the disease and sickness of sin. Jesus is actually moved by this specific individual in this Gentile territory in the fact that he cannot hear or speak.

And he's interested in that more than what the crowds might know or see. Who is Jesus?

Jesus is the one who draws near and cares about you individually, personally, specifically.

No matter what your story is, if you are a Christian, that is true of you. God's grace to you, his drawing near to you might have been as simple as providing a church that is in your part of town where your language is spoken.

God's grace in meeting you might have been in providing you with your actual parents who actually taught you about Jesus, which is not a small thing.

[16 : 07] God's grace to you might have been that you were suspicious of Christians and hurt by the church, and God brought the one person that you trusted and respected to talk to you about it.

God's grace to you might have been that you didn't get it, and he finally brought someone who could explain it in words you could understand. God's grace to you might have been that you were hurting and suffering like this man, and you walked into a study in a group, and someone said the right words that finally got through.

God's grace to you might be that you're rebellious and hard-hearted and cynical, and God arranged the circumstances of your life in such a way that he finally broke you.

God's grace for you is personal and specific and careful, and that's every story with Jesus. Jesus came to be able to make you here if you're a Christian.

If you're not a Christian, this right now might be God's moment of moving towards you. That, perhaps, we hope, is why you are here with us now.

[17 : 27] That like the blind man, Jesus is moving closer to touch you personally, specifically, privately, powerfully. That is who Jesus is.

And so we see Jesus' care. We also see, this will sound familiar, this man's great need.

He is utterly helpless. Verse 32, other people have to bring him to Jesus. Verse 32, again, he's deaf and he cannot speak. He's so helpless that Jesus has to invent some rudimentary sign language to have a hope of communicating something to him.

Verse 34, and don't miss this, Jesus commands him to do something, right? Ethophah, be opened, is a command. It's telling. And Jesus has to be the one to give him the power to obey.

Jesus doesn't just command him to see, Jesus causes him to see. Don't miss that. That is one of the spiritual principles that's the baseline of Christianity, that what God commands, he also empowers.

[18 : 43] The obedience he expects is the obedience he enables. Moralism tells us just obey. End of discussion. But it provides no power.

The gospel says obey and comes along with the engine that fuels it. God empowers our obedience by his spirit, through his promises, just like in this man as he commands his eyes, his ears to be opened and his mouth to be loose, he's the one at the same time providing the power for that to happen.

Brothers and sisters, if you're a Christian, that is the same thing that has happened to you. God commands obedience that only he can enable and empower. as he meets you personally, specifically, carefully, he is the one who is giving you what you need.

You are so helpless that you can't do anything unless God performs a miracle. You are so helpless.

You cannot respond to God unless he performs a miracle. And so we've been asking this question, who Jesus is, and what we're finding out in this passage is we're actually incapable of answering it unless God gives us sight.

[20 : 10] We're asking a question that's impossible for us to conclude. We won't be able to see it, grasp it, apply it, understand it, live differently unless God is the one who comes and performs a miracle in our hearts and our lives.

We, together, this morning and every Sunday when we open up God's word are doing something that is actually impossible unless God comes and helps us. That's why at the beginning of every worship service I pray that God would send his spirit to us in the prayer of invocation that he would help us because we know that unless there's a miracle we are wasting our time together.

Unless God works powerfully in our midst to help us see and hear and understand we will not be able to change or grow. And so how do we respond to Jesus?

We respond to him by recognizing the helplessness of us and those around us. We are spiritually dead without God's intervention in our lives. We are not as clever or independent as we'd like to think.

If you're a Christian there is nothing that you have that is not by grace. That's what Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 4.

[21 : 29] If the gospel does nothing else if the gospel of Mark has no other effect on us it should do this it should remove us far away from the land of self-congratulation and pride.

Many people think that this story appears in Mark and appears in none of the other gospels because Mark is the record that comes from the apostle Peter. In the next chapter chapter 8 we're going to see that the apostle Peter thinks he gets it and he doesn't.

And so many people think that this story shows up in this place in this gospel because Peter is saying this is what had to happen to me. This is what I was why I couldn't see or understand Jesus. It was this sort of radical transformation that had to take place in my life. As we look at the world around us sometimes it is tempting to say how could those people be so stupid?

Don't hear what I'm not saying. It is good and right to lament the sin and evil and brokenness of this world and apart from God's grace we are no better.

[22 : 47] It is only because of a miracle it is only because God has touched our ears and our tongue that we are able to see what we see. And so there's a posture of humility and grace that comes to the world around us even as we grieve and lament its wickedness and sin and evil.

Because we know that we stand apart from it only by God's grace. If you're not a Christian you can hear and listen all you want and it will make no difference unless God's grace his powerful miraculous work in your life penetrates your heart and your life and your mind.

And so you can pray. There's a reason that you're here. Nothing happens by accident. And you can pray that God's power would be at work in your life that he would cut through the things that you can't hear and understand that he would unstop your ears that you would be able to finally see and understand and believe Jesus for who he is and all his power and beauty and holiness.

It is Jesus ultimately who is able to do that for us. The things I say in other words have no impact. They are powerless.

They are futile unless God is at work. Unless God chooses to use my words as his instrument.

[24 : 26] Christian. So if you're not a Christian you can pray that God would make these things effective in your life. That he would open your eyes. If you are a Christian you can pray that God would continue to open your eyes.

In two weeks we're going to look at another healing and we're going to talk about that more. There's going to be a man who sort of sees doesn't fully see. It's going to be a picture of what it looks like to be a Christian.

Finally I want you to recognize not just that we are blind also those around us are blind as well. Do you want to see your friend come to know and follow Jesus?

Do you know someone who thinks they're okay spiritually but they're not? What's the best thing you can do? Yes, speak to them but even more than that pray that God would be at work in the words you speak.

God is the one who must perform the miracle. Ask that God's supernatural work would be shown by his power. Last week and this week you may have noticed that a lot of my application is that we pray.

[25 : 48] Why? Because that's the way we talk to God now. Jesus is not with us physically he's with us spiritually. The disciples could go up to Jesus and see him and ask him.

We now go to God in prayer and ask in the same way. The best illustration the clearest explanation is worthless if it falls on deaf ears.

God and God alone is the one who unstops the ears of people. He's the one who unstops our ears he's the one who unstops the ears of those around us.

So we look to him we pray to him we trust in him. That's exactly what we've already sung this morning. I invite you to look with me at page four of your worship guide.

We sang about Jesus as the one who meets us verse one Jesus ready stands to save you full of pity love and power. That's the doctor who cares about you.

[27 : 01] That is the doctor who sighs. And then the next last verse if you tarry till you're better you will never come at all.

Come to Jesus now. Let him heal you. you are deaf Jesus is the one who has to give you hearing. Who is Jesus? Jesus is the doctor who cares about you. He comes into your life personally and specifically.

How do we respond? God we recognize how helpless we are without God and his power in our lives and we throw ourselves on his mercy.

Let's pray. our father in heaven we praise you and thank you for the work that you have done that you are doing and that you will do in our lives.

[28 : 04] We thank you for the grace that you've offered to us that you give us. We ask that it would abound more and more that we would grow in our ability to see and hear and understand and believe that you are our good and loving Lord and Savior the doctor who cares for us who heals us who saves us.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.