Mark 7:31-37 The Glory of Jesus Displayed in the Healing of a Deaf Man

Listen to these words from Isaiah 35: “The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, 'Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

You may ask, “Why do I read chapter 35 of Isaiah this morning before moving to our text in Mark 7?” I read it because what is happening in Mark 7 is a direct fulfillment of the prophecy in Is. 35. Look in v. 32. The word for “speech” Mark uses in this text is used only one more time in the entire Bible. We find it in Is. 35:6; “The tongue of the mute will sing for joy.” Chapter 35 is part of the final part of the first half of Isaiah. It follows a series of judgments to be poured out upon Edom, Egypt, Tyre, Israel, and Jerusalem. But, in cp. 35 the theme shifts from judgment to blessings that would come at the coming day of the Lord. The end times (in a sense) began with the coming of the Messiah. Jesus’ healing of this particular “deaf and mute” man in the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon is the firstfruit of the fulfillment of Isaiah 35:10: “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

Starting with the demon possessed man from the tombs, to the Caananite woman, to this deaf/mute man, the glory of the Lord is displayed to the nations. What a time in prophetic history! Now, let’s move to specific story itself. How do we see the glory of the Lord in this miracle?

1. We see the glory of the Lord in His Touch. In verse 32 again we see a group of people bringing their friend to Jesus. “And they begged him to lay his hand on him.” Notice what Jesus does next. He took the man aside from the crowd privately. Again, Jesus is showing that this man isn’t simply another problem, but a unique individual. Then, he “put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue.” Why in the world would Jesus heal in such a way? He could have spoken the word and this man would have been healed immediately. Instead, he thrust his fingers into his ears, spit on his own hand and touched the man’s tongue. This is considered gross in our culture, much less in the Jewish/Gentile culture. Unless he were a great lip reader this man would not have been able to understand Jesus and so Jesus wanted to communicate to the man what he was going to do. I believe he was saying, “Something will be done for your ears as well as your tongue, and I am going to do it.”
First of all we see Jesus’ radical identification with the needy. And, as was the case last week with the “unclean” Syrophoenician woman, this man was the same. Jesus was not afraid, and in fact, boldly went to those the Jewish leaders considered to be the “scum of the earth.” He was not afraid to identify with such people and even touch them. Remember Job, “Oh that I might see my redeemer.” Then he said, in 19:25, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.” Our Lord never recoiled from laying his hand on sinful humanity! The Bible says in Phil 2: “Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” He identified with us. And, this isn’t all. He did not stop with simply taking on humanity. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2Co 5:2). He did more than simply touch us. He became sin for us. He came to take our greatest need. Oh how he is beautiful! If your sins are forgiven today it is because Christ bore your sins.

We also see that our Lord’s methods aren’t always our methods and the ways of God are not always our ways. He is sovereign and He can choose whatever means He wants to bring about His purposes. Concerning the use of means in converting souls we know that “faith comes by hearing and by hearing the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). This has always been the same concerning the revelation of God through his word. But, when Jesus walked on this earth, he WAS the WORD of God. Every word he spoke was truth. It was revelation.

Now, this has always been true. What I am trying to say in applying the general use of means as every church uses the Word may be different. In other words, one church may use some materials that God uses greatly to the conversion of souls and the growth of the church. But, we mustn’t think that we can also go and buy their materials and use what they are using and get the same results. The Spirit blows where He wills. And, every church is different in this respect. We must be sure we are faithful in the little things (the Word and Prayer) and let God move as He wills.

2. We see the glory of the Lord in His Look. Look at v. 34. Mark says, “And looking up to heaven...” Jesus always looked to heaven. Jesus was always in constant communion with the Father, whether he was speaking to Him or not. Do you remember a few weeks ago when Scott preached from Mark 6? Before feeding the 5 thousand men and their families with the 5 loaves and 2 fishes, he “looked to heaven.” In John cp. 11, just before powerfully raising Lazarus from the dead, he “looked to heaven.” In John cp. 17, just before he would go to the cross and do what he had come to do, he, “lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you...’” Jesus also said in this same chapter, “I am not of the world” (v. 18).

Jesus came from heaven. He is the Son of God. He is God in the flesh. And, we see in this look to heaven another clue of the relationship between the Father and the Son from all eternity in the Trinity. This look to heaven by Jesus is simply another indication that Jesus was in constant communion and dependence on the Father. The only time in all of eternity where this relationship was broken was when the Son became our sin-bearer and cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

The point here is that Jesus was always dependent upon the Father. One of the ways we see this is that Jesus always prayed. He truly “prayed without ceasing.” In the midst of a very busy
schedule and “hands on” ministry he always looked to heaven. Kent Hughes, a commentator I like to read, says this: “If I have any sense of where the Christian culture is today, I would say our Number One sin is not sensuality or materialism (though they are close behind), but prayerlessness.” “Prayerlessness is the fundamental sin of the busy Christian.” If I look at my own life, I have to agree with this statement. (This is often the topic of discussion in our elder’s meetings.)

Parents, we can be so attentive to meeting the needs of our children that we do not take time to pray for them, and by not praying for them we deny them our greatest service. As you go to work you can be so intent on glorifying by doing a good job that you do not glorify Him in your heart. You can be so busy doing good things for our neighbors, community, and church that the “upward look” to heaven seen in Jesus is nothing more than a nod. As we minister in the good deeds of the Christian life we may come to imagine that our service for him is more important than our communion and dependence upon God.

I was speaking to a long time missionary who has lived in some very difficult places. As we talked he said, “John, I believe the reason American Christians are so shallow is because of our environment of choices.” He said, “There are so many distractions in life that really don’t matter. And, we are caught up in these distractions.” Our American cultural environment is not the most conducive to simple communion and dependence on God.

Another simple application is the fact that everything we have is from heaven. God is the giver of all things, whether physical or spiritual, things seen or things not seen. We must give him the glory. Jesus look to heaven communicated to the man that everything is from God. And, concerning his ears and his tongue, who made them? God did!

3. We see the glory of the Lord in His Sigh. After Jesus looked to heaven, he “sighed” (v. 34). This is an interesting word. James uses the same word when he says, “Do not grumble/complain” against one another. In other places it simply means to grown inwardly or outwardly. There is great emotion in the meaning and we need context to understand it. Kids, have your parents ever asked you to do something and you reply with a big sigh or some kind of groan. This is one way it is used. Here is another. Have you ever seen hungry children being advertised on television that really pulls at your emotions to the point where you either sigh with compassion or even cry?

In Mark 8:12 the Pharisees came to Jesus “seeking a sign from him to test him.” And “he sighed deeply in his spirit.” What did Jesus do when Lazarus died? When he came to the hometown of his good friends Mary and Martha, he was deeply moved in his spirit and even wept (John 11). At one time Luke tells us that Jesus looked out over the city of Jerusalem and wept. When we come to this pitiful, deaf/mute, Gentile man we see Jesus sighing. I believe that this sigh showed the compassion and sympathy he had for this man. He truly took this man’s condition to his heart. Jesus never healed anyone half-heartedly. He always put everything he had into his work of mercy.

In this sigh we see the glory of Christ. There was never a man who truly felt this deaf/mute man’s lifetime of sorrows than our Lord Jesus. There was never a man who loved the Gentile, Canaanite, pagan, “dog” of a woman (as we saw in last week’s sermon) than our Lord. There was never a man who looked on compassion at his disciples as they were terrifyingly tossed in
the midst of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. Isaiah said, “He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3). Listen to these words as God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel, “As for you son of man, groan; with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan before their eyes. And when they say to you, ‘Why do you groan?’ you shall say, ‘Because of the news that it is coming. Every heart will melt, and all hands will be feeble; every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it is coming, and it will be fulfilled,’” declares the Lord GOD” (Eze 21:6-7).

Our Lord truly groaned (sighed) at this man’s physical condition. But, more than his physical condition he groaned because of this man’s sins that separated him from a holy God. He looked at Jerusalem and wept, knowing that there would be ruin and great destruction, unlike anything in history in 70 AD when the Romans would destroy the city and the temple. But, he wept for their condition. And, as we look back we know that Jesus would groan again, as he died on the cross, took the wrath of a holy God and bore the sins of his people, crying out, “My God why have you forsaken me!” And, concerning the example of our Lord, Paul says, “Let this mind also be in you” (Phil 2).

What about your compassion? Do you ever weep over the condition of another person? Do you ever weep over another man’s sin? If you desire to minister Christ’s healing, you must share his compassion for hurting humanity. There is a hurting world out there, with thousands (millions) who are hurting every bit as much, or more, than this deaf man. We must come to the world with a deep sigh. I must also ask, “Do you ever weep over your own sin?” “Blessed are those who mourn (both for their own sins and the sins of the world). Why don’t we mourn more?

4. We see the glory of the Lord in His Word. At the end of verse 34 and verse 35 Jesus said to him, “Ephphatha, that is be opened. And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.”

The same powerful word that spoke the universe into existence is the same word spoken to this man. Paul wrote to the Colossians, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him, And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:15-17). Jesus made this man’s tongue and this man’s ears. And we see another amazing miracle of our Lord. After the miracle, Mark tells us in v. 37, “And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done all things well’ He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

Today, we see that the glory of the Lord has come to Lebanon. And they said, “Jesus has done all things good.” Can you say “Jesus has done all things good?” If He has touched your lame tongue and opened your deaf ears, then surely the glory of the Lord has come to your house. And, you can say, “Jesus has done all things good?” Oh how beautiful are the glories of our Lord!

I would like to conclude with a few words about applications and the glory of Christ. Applications, especially as we consider what we should be doing in this life, are extremely important. But, we must NOT start with the applications when we consider a text of Scripture.
We must start with Christ Himself. Applications will follow. (Give example of continually pouring water into a cup.) My goal as a pastor is not so much to tell you how to live, but to point you to Christ, then move to how you should live. The applications will always be an overflow from an understanding of the person and work of Christ. This is why you will “know them by their fruits.” If you are living godly in motive and deed, it will be because the person and work of Christ. You will never touch if you don’t understand that Christ touched our humanity [incarnation]. You will never sigh with compassion until you see how compassionate our Lord was. (even to you). You will never proclaim the word of God as you ought until you see the Word who became flesh. You will never look on this world as Christ looked until you see His look to heaven. CHRIST MUST BE BEAUTIFUL. Our applications will follow. Trust Him today. See his beauties today.