

## JESUS HEALS A DEAF AND MUTE MAN

Mark 7:31-37

Key Verse: 7:34

"He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, 'Ephphatha!' (which means, 'Be opened!')."

Last time we thought about the Syrophenician woman. She was a Gentile who was a Greek, born in Syrophenicia. She was not privileged to come to Jesus, but she came to Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. As soon as she heard about Jesus, the woman came and fell at his feet. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. Jesus said to her, "First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs" (27). Jesus didn't want her to be a "hit-and-run" baseball player. Jesus had a deep compassion on this woman and wanted to plant faith in her soul. This is the reason why Jesus gave her such a harsh reply. But she had faith in Jesus. When she heard from Jesus that she was not privileged to receive Jesus' healing because she was a Gentile, she got even closer to Jesus and begged him, saying, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs" (28). When she had faith in Jesus, God poured divine wisdom in her heart and she answered in the way Jesus could recognize her as a woman of God. Then Jesus told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter" (29). She had faith, but her faith had not been tested if it were a true faith or a false one. Her faith was tested; it was a true one. When she came home, she found her child lying on the bed, eating and singing, and the demon was gone. In this lesson we learned that we have faith, but our faith must be tested and we must obtain the faith that Jesus recognizes. Otherwise, we cannot be true men or women of faith. Faith is victory. Paul says in Philippians 4:13, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Mark 11:22-23 says, "'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered. 'I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.'" Without faith, our hearts can be melted living in this real world. Without faith, we cannot but despair at everything. But when we have faith, we can overcome the world. We can be men and women of wisdom. What is Christian life? Christian life is having faith in [Jesus Christ](#), the Almighty God. What is a Christian? A Christian is one who obtains faith that can overcome himself and his inner person. What is faith? Faith is obtaining the grace of our [Lord Jesus Christ](#) through his crucifixion on the cross. Faith is obtaining the glorious kingdom of God as our inheritance. Faith is finally obtaining the crown of life as a faithful child of God. It is amazing that a Syrophenician woman had this kind of faith. We believe that we also can obtain this kind of faith since this woman obtained it. Today we want to think about Jesus healing a man who was deaf and mute.

### I. The change of the Decapolis people (31-32)

Let's look at verses 31 and 32. "Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. 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." Indeed, two things are amazing. Firstly, when Jesus landed

his foot on the soil of Gerasa, which was one city of the Decapolis (Decapolis means "ten cities"), he and his disciples wanted to have even a few minutes of sleep anywhere, on a rock or on the soil, because they suffered enough in a storm. But suddenly a man possessed by demons played the role of Frankenstein. He was worse than Frankenstein because he was cutting his trunk and chest with a sharp stone. He was bleeding and yelling from his lungs in the night sky among the tombs. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!" (5:6-7) Once he was a handsome and cute boy who studied well and was known to have a promising future by his classmates, especially by girls. But since he was possessed by a demon because of one small mistake, he became the most miserable existence at that time. He was harmful to others. He could not recognize himself. He complained to God: "Why am I here when I don't want to be here?" But Jesus healed him by saying, "What is your name?" (5:9) He answered that his name was "Legion." It meant he had the demonic power of one regiment of Roman soldiers in him. Even so, the devil knew they were helpless before Jesus, the Almighty God. Then they bargained with Jesus that if he gave two thousand pigs to them, they would return the man to Jesus. Jesus, without the permission of the pig owners, gave the two thousand pigs and saved this one man. I repeated this event that had happened in Gerasa, one of the cities of the Decapolis. It is because there was a great change. When Jesus ruined their pig business completely, the people of Gerasa came to Jesus and forced Jesus and his disciples to leave their town and never appear again. Due to the destruction of their pig industry, they ground their teeth until many of them had to visit the dental clinic. The people of Gerasa loved pigs more than a man possessed by 6,000 demons.

Secondly, we learn that the people of the Decapolis were very much changed when Jesus visited the Decapolis once more, looking for a place to take a few moments to eat and rest. This time they welcomed Jesus and asked Jesus' mercy on a man who was deaf and mute. Look at verses 31,32. "Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. 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." Here we learn that when a man possessed by demons was healed at the cost of 2,000 pigs, the temporary pig industry of the town was ruined. The man wanted to be one of Jesus' disciples. He was not accepted but appointed as the director of Decapolis evangelism. He worked hard, saying, "I was a demon-possessed man. I chopped my trunk and breast with a sharp stone, jumping up and down among the tombs. But Jesus healed me and now I am full of his grace and God's love is in my heart." Sometime it must have seemed he went around in vain. But it was not in vain. People were evangelized in their hearts.

When they saw a deaf and mute man, and at the same time heard that Jesus landed in the region of the Decapolis, they brought a pathetic person to him. He had two ears. But he could not hear. Even if he heard Beethoven's symphony number five, it didn't make any sense. When he heard Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake," he felt it didn't make any difference. He was extremely nervous because he could not hear what his family members were saying to him. Because he was deaf, he could not hear, so he could not speak. What a pathetic person he was. Here we learn that to have two ears to hear the word of God is not a small privilege and blessing.

## II. A spiritually deaf man

We have to realize that there are two kinds of deaf and mute men. The physically deaf and mute man is more pathetic than the blind man. The blind man cannot see, so he lives in the darkness. He does not see the evils of the world nor the realities of the world. He does not see the display board of the stock market. He is okay. The deaf and mute man could see everything. So he wanted to say something which was definitely correct and necessary. But his mouth didn't function due to his deafness. So, the deaf man will think he is most pathetic in the whole world. I don't know who is more pathetic. Only these people themselves know their situations. But one thing is very clear. There are not only physically deaf and mute men, but also spiritually deaf and mute men.

There are too many stories about the spiritually deaf man. We want to think about a few examples in the Bible. Because of Adam's mistake to try to be equal with God, the world was cursed. Cain did not listen to God's broken-hearted counseling for his salvation. After hearing God's counseling, Cain knew that listening to God's counseling was good. But he decided not to listen to him. He knew that if he did not listen to God's counseling he would live with a sense of crime and punishment and become a wanderer all his lifetime without any place to reside (Gen 4:14). There are many of Cain's descendants. They are all spiritually deaf men. In Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment" the main character Raskolnikov committed murder. He thought he would be okay. But he had severe insomnia because of terrible nightmares. He could not sleep properly. So he quit his law study and became one of the exemplary evil men. Evil peoples' doing evil reaches to God in heaven. So God wanted to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, the twin cities. At the same time, angels wanted to rescue Lot's family members. But Lot's wife did not listen to the angel's voice and looked back at Sodom and Gomorrah, where she left one of her socks and brassiere. As a result, she became a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26). Another example is a very serious one. The people of Israel lived in the Egyptian Empire 430 years as captives. Their labor was heavy and food was too small an amount. They were suffering from hard labor and hunger. After God delivered them from the Egyptian Empire by the work of Moses, who was chosen by God as a shepherd of Israel, they were happy indeed. God gave them the Ten Commandments as the basic rule of his people to live the way God wanted. Moses went up to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. During that time, the people of Israel made an image of an idol and randomly enjoyed drinking and dancing as if they were not chosen people. God's anger burned. Through Moses, God cut them down with the sword of the Levites (Ex 32). It surprises us that though they had just been liberated and were free people, in a few days they became like slaves and reveled to the point of being animals. They were spiritually deaf people who did not listen to God's word.

Then there was the first king, Saul, who was a head taller than all other Israelites. He looked handsome. He seemed to have been worthy of being King of Israel. But when he rose to power, he did not listen to God's word. He did everything according to his feelings. Once, Saul and his General David won a great victory. They were making a triumphal march into the king's palace. Then girls chanted with tambourines, saying, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." King Saul was extremely jealous after hearing the girls' singing (1Sa 18:7,8). He

wanted girls' admiration as a king of Israel. But the girls liked and admired shepherd boy David. Since that time, for thirteen years Saul lived to slaughter David. Saul died, together with his son Jonathan, in a war with the Philistines (1Sa 31). People know that being deaf to God's word brings disaster. But they are always unaware of the result of God's punishment and repeat the same thing again and again, not hearing the word of God. Isaiah 6:9 says, "Be ever hearing, but never understanding." This verse is repeated in Mark 4:14 and John 12:37-38. These verses excellently apply this spiritual deafness to the spiritual leaders of every time.

When we read Mark 8:32, Jesus taught his disciples the meaning of his death and resurrection again and again. But Peter didn't listen to his teaching, and he took Jesus aside and rebuked Jesus as much as he wanted for speaking about his death. The disciples were spiritually deaf for a long time. After the resurrection of Jesus, they saw the glory of the Risen Jesus, and they began to open their spiritual eyes and listen to what Jesus talked about and promised. In the Bible, Job's friends were rebuked by God for not speaking of God what is right. But they spoke again and again to Job until Job almost perished (Job 42:7,8). They were spiritually deaf men in the Bible. They were champions as spiritually deaf men in the Bible narratives.

III. How can I get out of the spiritual deaf and mute condition?

Isaiah 35:5 says, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped." What our Lord Jesus Christ wants is for us to hear the word of God and speak the word of God, getting out of the deaf and mute situation. But it is extremely difficult. First of all, it is difficult because people are people of their time. Some people live in their own generation. Some people live in their own traditions. Some people live in one country with their own culture. Some people live as their parents lived. Therefore, to open the spiritual ears of each person is very difficult. St. Peter was the top disciple of Jesus. He accepted the Gentiles as fellow Christian friends. One time, he was eating with Gentile friends. But Jewish Christians came. Then he ran away from his seat and hid himself not to be seen. This is a kind of noble hypocrisy. He should have opened his spiritual eyes and listened to the word of God that all men are equal under God. But he lived in a Jewish tradition and was ashamed of eating with Gentile Christian brothers. So he was severely rebuked by St. Paul (Gal 2:14).

There was the Roman centurion who executed Jesus. While he was executing Jesus, he was captured by Jesus' way of death. Especially he heard Jesus' prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34a). His heart was opened to see God in Jesus. He shouted, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (Mk 15:39).

In order to get out of the spiritual deaf and mute condition and hear the word of God from heaven, we should not live habitually. Psalm 1:1-3 say, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers." Here, planting our heart in the word of God means that we must live in the word of God. The word of God goes beyond all generations,

all traditions and all prejudices and all differences. In the word of God we find the way and the truth and the life (Jn 14:6). Psalm 119:1 says, "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord." Psalm 119:9-10 say, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands." All the things of the world change, not in 100 years, but every ten years. But the word of God never changes, even for the last 2,000 years. The word of God opens the eyes of all blind men, the mouths of all mute men and the ears of all deaf men. Therefore, we must bring the deaf and mute to Jesus for his healing grace upon them. The people of Gerasa of the Decapolis were running a pig industry. Once, Jesus ruined their industry to save one demon-possessed man. This man opened his spiritual eyes. In other words, his deaf ears and mute tongue were opened by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then he influenced his people in ten cities. As a result, people from the Decapolis brought a deaf and mute person to Jesus to lay his hand on him and heal him. Now they were freed from the change of the world and the chains of the world. They became wholesome men in Jesus Christ who could see the [kingdom of God](#) and who had the privilege of entering the kingdom of God. May God bring many deaf and mute men to Jesus for the laying of his hand on them. May God abundantly bless our one-to-one Bible study so that many deaf and mute souls may be healed by Jesus' grace.

#### IV. Those who received the grace of Ephphatha

When we read the major prophets and minor prophets, the message is just one. God weeps and wants his chosen people to listen to him. But they never listened to his word. They lived according to their own ideas. Nevertheless, when we trace the Bible story very carefully, there were many of those who listened to the word of God. Especially, Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel were the men who listened to God and delivered the message of God to his chosen people. For this, they risked their lives.

We have to evaluate ourselves, whether we are listening to God or not. For the last 40 years, UBF people have tried their best to listen to his word and obey the words from their hearts. As a result, God blessed UBF ministry. God used a hermit country, still divided and laid in the corner of the world. At the present, we have nine missionaries from America. The first one is Missionary John Bird's family. Missionary Terese Bird from Wales came to the European Conference. She delivered her work report in Welsh. It sounded as if ducks were looking for something to eat; very strange. Terese Bird once was a very idealistic woman and she wanted to be better than her younger brother, Dr. Joseph Schafer. But she gave up everything and now she suffers enough to master Welsh and take care of their children. Missionary John Bird has been engaging in one-to-one Bible study. Wynelle Nett from Washington UBF married Shepherd Walter Nett of Germany. Now she is teaching the Bible in German and prays for German students and cooks delicious German food. Missionary Paul Laska from Madison went to Volgograd in Russia. But Russians' sentiment is evident toward Americans. They never let an American family stay in one place more than one month. Because of this, Missionary Paul Laska must go back to Moscow and stay one month, and then come back to Volgograd. He lived in this way for the last two years. Missionary Tony Tsai has an eminent position in P&G. He was sent to Belgium as the director of P&G there. His four-year term was over. But he applied again and again, and he gained a position as the Switzerland director of P&G. Susan San

Marcos was in Dr. Sohn's fellowship. She went to the Philippines as a missionary. Now she is coworking with coworkers there. Missionary Don Kuper's family went first to Paraguay and next to Argentina as permanent missionaries. Missionary Chris Sagel went to Korea as an English teacher for three months. But he has stayed over there for the last three years and he wants to be a permanent missionary to Korea. Dr. Mike Farah gave up his marriage, next to Mother Barry, and is working in the United Arab Emirates. It is possible for him because he is a medical doctor and he is sort of Arabian. When we think about American missionaries, it sounds like a dream. In the past, most Americans in UBF were all like vending machines. They moved as much as they got coins. But now there are so many people who pray that God may make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation once again. Our American journey team intimidated European UBF members and even Korean staff members in their behavior and spiritual authority. What a great work of God! Generally, when Americans hear the word "money," even the baby in their womb comes out quickly. But there are many who want to open their ears to hear the word of God and speak up for the word of God. It is indeed marvelous. Shepherd Steve Stasinos, one of the testimony messengers at the CIS conference, was brilliant among the CIS testimony sharers. The CIS members all memorized their testimonies and their gestures were well orchestrated. But Shepherd Steve Stasinos spoke with the Spirit of God clearly, confidently from his heart. Then, Russian speakers looked a little daunted.

When we see the world mission work in UBF, there are unbelievable miracles going on. Miracles are continually happening. When we heard the report from Dr. Mark Yoon about the summer conference in Sudan, we opened our mouths and could not say anything. It was because the Sudan director of UBF, Andrew Kim, has stayed there for ten years, overcoming the heat and all the time carrying malaria fever. He said to Dr. Mark Yoon that he was glad to be in Sudan with Sudanese young people, and to study the Bible in hunger and in the scorching heat. Dr. Mark Yoon said Andrew Kim has no idea to go back to his native land. His love for the sheep in the mission land amazed Dr. Yoon. Now Dr. Charles Kim and Pastor Mark Vuckovich went to join the Nigerian conference. I heard 115 students gathered there. They sleep in the classroom. They eat in the classroom and they have lectures in the classroom. In one room they do everything. But there is an invisible spiritual order and there is marvelous spiritual joy as the conference is going on. We have no way to describe what God is doing through UBF missionaries who only pray. We only repent that we are living an easygoing way of life in America.

But we pray that we may open our spiritual ears and listen to God and pick up the word of God. In short, we must receive the grace of Ephphatha from our Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, we must ask God that God may make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We thank God that there are so many young students who are determined to carry out this mission. Praise God! May the grace of Ephphatha spread all over the country and the world.