

Intro

In this passage we read about Jesus healing a deaf and mute man but putting his fingers in the man's ears and his spit in the man's mouth.

And what it means is BEAUTIFUL!

More theology about the identity and mission of Jesus

And a lot of apologetics tonight.

Critics go to town!

Because I want a resource. To help those impacted by skeptical stuff online or even in scholarly works.

M25 - Mk7:31-37

³¹Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis.

³²They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they implored Him to lay His hand on him.

³³Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva;

³⁴and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!"

³⁵And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly.

³⁶And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it.

³⁷They were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

³¹Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis.

- A correction:
 - Last week – Tyre on his way to Caesarea Philippi.
 - Wrong, first back to Galilee.
 - Then to Caesarea
- Decapolis
 - According to Tyndale Bible Dictionary: *During the lifetime of Jesus, the cities of the Decapolis, which had become moderately prosperous trade centers, were consolidated into a Roman alliance against a possible Jewish uprising.*¹
 - Mk 5, demoniac
 - He was a messenger!
 - Mark 5:20 (NASB95) ²⁰And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.
 - Why does it matter?
 - I don't know if this man was Gentile or not.
 - But, it is a majority Gentile area and it impacts Gentiles.
 - ***Matthew 15:31 (NASB95) ³¹So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.***

¹ Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). In [Tyndale Bible dictionary](#) (p. 370). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

- Mark shows us Jesus is the savior of all people.
- But, last week gave us the proper context “Jew first”
 - To show Jesus is the Messiah of the OT

³²They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they implored Him to lay His hand on him.

- “they brought” “they implored”
 - A group effort.
 - Sometimes it’s individuals
 - Application: seek the Lord and persist!
 - Sometimes it’s groups
 - Application: bring people to God
 - They are inspiring
 - Also the friends of the paralytic
 - Don’t forget your evangelistic mentality toward others.
- But didn’t they ask Him to leave?
 - May not be the same people, just the region.
 - BUT Jesus rep was spread from the incident with the pigs, so why don’t they ask Him to leave?
 - Last time – it was about pigs
 - This time – the man has told his story.
 - It’s our needs that lead us to Christ
 - It’s hearing other’s testimonies that inspires us to come.
 - Point? Share.
 - 3 tips.
 - Don’t exaggerate... just be real.
 - Not everyone was a demoniac
 - Don’t become a clone of testimonies you’ve heard.
 - Evaluate.... Write it out!
 - Also, don’t hide it to avoid embarrassment.
 - It draws people
 - It also draws ridicule. That’s ok.
 - Not only telling our story, but living the difference.
- This may be a stretch...
 - The testimony of a believer trumping a bad reputation caused by demons
 - It’s not our job to make Christianity look good.
 - It is our job to reveal how good it is.
 - Not fake advertisers... living examples
 - Representatives... all of us
 - To the world
 - To each other
 - ***Philippians 2:14–15 (NASB95)*** ¹⁴*Do all things without grumbling or disputing;* ¹⁵*so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,*
 - Character – to love God and shine for others to see Him

- ***Ephesians 5:8–10 (NASB95) ⁸for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.***
 - Same two motives
 - To love God and help others.
- A selfless life!
 - So healthy

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- 1st – Jesus is wonderful
- 2nd - Interesting elements
 - “Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself”
 - Why?
 - Privacy, secrecy – Jesus later tells them not to tell everyone about it.
 - “fingers into his ears”
 - “touched his tongue with the saliva”
 - Also in Mk 8, he applies spit to someone’s blind eyes
 - Greeks – Galen (born in the 2nd century) said that spit had healing properties
 - It does...
 - Animals (small wounds)
 - An experiment where human spit was applied to minor wounds on rabbits.
 - But Jesus is doing more than that.
 - Not a treatment. A miraculous healing.
 - Jews have an interesting story in the Talmud “A man once came before Rabbi Chaninah and testified to him, “I am sure that this man is the firstborn.” Chaninah asked, “How is it that you are certain of this?” The man said, “Because when sick people came to his father he would tell them, ‘Go to my son Shikchat. He is firstborn and his spittle heals.’” ... there is a tradition that the spittle of the firstborn of a father heals.” (b.*Bava Batra* 126b)
 - A strange thing but...
 - A way of showing them Jesus is the firstborn?
 - Difference
 - Jesus is the healer, not the spit. Spit is incidental.
 - “ephphatha”
 - Word of incantation?
 - Craig Keener says “Some scholars point out that magicians often spoke unintelligible phrases during healings. Here, however, Jesus speaks

Aramaic, which would have been known to most people, Jewish or Gentile, in Syria-Palestine”²

- Some say Jesus’ sigh is because this miracle is difficult.
 - But Jesus raises the dead with a casual word!
- Then WHY?
 - Why the fingers, the sigh, the word and the spit?
 - Because the man is deaf and dumb!
 - Jesus is meeting him there.
 - He sees Jesus look up – He’s helping me get God’s help.
 - He sees Jesus sigh and speak – He’s doing something!
 - He feels Jesus’ fingers in his ears –
 - I imagine he felt self-conscious, nervous, embarrassed
 - He’s touching my infirmity, he isn’t worried about this?
 - He sees Jesus apply his own saliva to the man’s mouth
 - He’s putting himself in the closest possible contact with my own infirmities.
 - This is about the cross!
- Aside: is this like pagan miracle stories?
 - OxfordBiblicalStudies.com says
 - “Ephphatha: “Aramaic command, ‘Be opened’, uttered by Jesus (Mark 7:34), after he had put his fingers into the ear, and spat and touched the tongue, of a deaf and dumb man, and healed him; a method recorded of other charismatic healers in Hellenistic society, and of the emperor Vespasian.”
 - Two problems
 - 1- not a method.
 - Jesus didn’t have methods.
 - He healed in a variety of ways.
 - He could heal remotely!
 - Not methods, lessons!
 - 2- NOT a common thing.
 - Notice NO references.
 - Gundry says it has only one parallel mentioned by R. Pasch who compares it to Epidaurus
 - Michael Wojciechowski compared Epidaurus to the gospels and said, “An influence of Epidaurus on the Gospels is not possible to trace.”
 - https://www.academia.edu/29349556/The_differences_between_the_healing_stories_from_Epidaurus_and_from_the_Gospels. R%C3%B3%C5%B3nice_mi%C4%99dzy_opisami_uzdrowie%C5%84_z_Epidauru_i_z_Ewangelii
 - No vocabulary connection
 - No form connection (in method)

² Keener, C. S. (1993). [*The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament*](#) (Mk 7:34–35). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

- The scheme
- Different contexts
- Sources are different
 - Epidaurus – votives, tablets and reliefs
 - Gospels – appeal to eye witness testimony
- “not popular”
- The Oxford article did mention Vespasian
 - Tacitus
 - *Histories 4.81 “One of the common people of Alexandria, well known for his loss of sight, threw himself before Vespasian's knees, praying him with groans to cure his blindness, being so directed by the god Serapis, whom this most superstitious of nations worships before all others; and he besought the emperor to deign to moisten his cheeks and eyes with his spittle. Another, whose hand was useless, prompted by the same god, begged Caesar to step and trample on it.”*
 - Vespasian eventually did it.
 - Vespasian (ruled 69-79AD) and Tacitus wrote about it 100-110AD
 - If there's influence, it's the other way around.
- People LOVE saying the Bible is copying
 - A careful examination shows it's not.
 - Not totally unique.
 - Just, stands alone. Is teaching Christian theology, not parroting pagan ideas.
- Parallelomania
- A method?
 - Jesus does it again in ch 8 (uses spit in healing the eyes of a blind man)
 - No – because of variety
 - Two lessons
 - 1- something to help faith.
 - My case “according to your faith”
 - The woman with the flow of blood just believed she would be healed by touching his garment
 - The centurion (just say the word)
 - Should we give people random tasks to stir up faith?
 - That's a stretch
 - But, if this regularly worked I'd be fine with it.
 - It doesn't.
 - 2- It's not about method, it's about Jesus.
 - His fingers, His garment, His saliva – He is the source!
 - Later, the apostles healed in JESUS' name.
 - Not with fingers in ears.

- I'm suspicious of "method" miracles
- The stories of Jesus' healings are **not** a handbook of miracle methods for us to try to duplicate.
 - They are showing us who Jesus is and our relationship to Him.
- Symbolic?
 - Jesus unstops our ears to hear the gospel
 - Jesus gives us His words to speak to the world

³⁶And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it.

- "them" – obviously he allowed the knowledge of the healing to disseminate to some group
 - You couldn't hide it. The guy was talking and hearing!
 - But, Jesus didn't want it spread to wildly.
 - Why?
 - We've mentioned several
 - Avoid early crucifixion
 - Keep the crowd from rioting/fighting Romans
 - To avoid a mob-like situation where Jesus can't minister
 - Here's another
 - It shows Jesus is doing MORE than healing.
 - The healing is testimony to Him, but His great work is yet to come.
 - The cross.
 - And that message is to be told everywhere
 - Jesus DID want His miracles proclaimed.
 - Here they are in the gospels.
 - Just not YET.
 - He wants them seen in **CONTEXT of the cross.**

³⁷They were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

- Don't miss the point
 - The miracle attests to who Jesus is.
- Significance
 - Mark's Greek word "mute" only appears twice in the whole Bible.
 - Isaiah 35:6
 - Where the healing of the mute is something that happens in the Messianic era.
 - Another connection
 - Isaiah 35:5 (NASB95) ⁵Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.
 - Opened and unstopped similar word, meaning "open up"
 - Mark 7 "ephphatha"
- Geography in Mark
 - **³¹Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis.**

- much of what follows is from the following article by **Michael Flowers, Jesus' "Journey" in Mark 7:31**, Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus, 14 (2016) 158-185.
<http://content.ebscohost.com/ContentServer.asp?T=P&P=AN&K=119557765&S=R&D=aph&EbscoContent=dGJyMMvI7ESeprQ4yNfsOLCmsEiep7dSsK64SLGWxWXS&ContentCustomer=dGJyMOzpr1G0qa9MuePfgeyx44Dt6fIA>
- The objection:
 - From Tyre through Sidon to Galilea has Jesus going North in order to go South.
 - 22 miles north!
 - Dennis Nineham, The Gospel of Mark (1963), p. 40.
 - "the evangelist was not directly acquainted with Palestine"
 - PHEME PERKINS
 - "The geographical route used to bring Jesus back to the Sea of Galilee from Tyre makes no sense on the map".
 - Kurt Niederwimmer considers it futile to reconstruct an actual historical journey from the geographical details given.
 - Frederick H. Grant concludes from 7:31 that the author of Mark's Gospel "was certainly unfamiliar with the geography and topography of northern Palestine".
- Further support
 - That Matthew knows Mark is wrong here and this is why he omits the reference to Sidon in his account.
- Answers
 - 1- Topography. Dr. Tim McGrew suggests.
 - To walk in a straight line from Tyre to Galilea is hard.
 - Mt. Meron is in the way (3/4 of a mile high)
 - SofG is 700 ft below sea level.
 - The path would be
 - Tyre, at sea level
 - Mt Meron ¾ mile high
 - SofG 700 ft below sea level
 - Solution!
 - A pass.
 - A path with water.
 - To drink.
 - Supported by "region of Tyre"
 - 2- Jesus had a reason to visit Sidon.
 - They all assume it's just the quickest way.
 - What can we learn from this?
 - They too quickly dismiss scripture.
- Why did Matthew omit Sidon?
 - Matt is a very abbreviated version
 - Mk 7:31-37 and Matt 15:29-31
 - 7 verses in Mk and 3 in Mt
 - Matthew 15:29–31 (NASB95) ²⁹Departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, He was sitting there. ³⁰And large crowds came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them. ³¹So the crowd

marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

- Mt DID say that Jesus visited Sidon.
 - Matthew 15:21 (NASB95) ²¹Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon.
- We see Jesus.
 - Connecting with our embarrassing weaknesses.
 - The incarnation.
 - Interpret the miracles with the cross.