

To Speak or Not to Speak

Mark 7:31-37

41-35

Open your Bible, if you will, to Mark 7, come to the last paragraph in the seventh chapter of Mark, working our way with great blessing through this account, this historical account of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

While you're looking up Mark 7 and verses 31 to 37, I'll give you a riddle. Who is permitted to speak but not able, and able to speak but not permitted? That's a paradox and I'm not going to leave you hanging, I'll give you the answer. The answer is in the passage before you. We're going to meet the man who was permitted to speak, but not able and then able to speak but not permitted. Verse 31, "Again He...being Jesus...went out from the region of Tyre and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee within the region of Decapolis. They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty. And they implored Him to lay His hand on him. Jesus took him aside from the crowd by himself and put His fingers into his ears. And after spitting, touched his tongue with the saliva and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, 'Ephphatha!' that is, 'Be opened.' And his ears were open and the impediment of his tongue was removed and he began speaking plainly. And He gave them orders not to tell anyone but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. They were utterly astonished, saying, 'He has done all things well, He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'"

Every Sunday when we get together and go through the narrative of Mark's gospel, I feel a little bit like a story teller, and that's exactly what the gospel writers have done, they have told us the story of Jesus one event after another. In telling a story, it is always helpful to get the general context, the big picture so we know how this particular event fits into the full story.

For well over a year now, our Lord Jesus has ministered in the region of Galilee. Galilee is the northern part of the land of Israel. The south is called Judea. The south features the great city of Jerusalem. The north, a more rural area, has as its main feature a lake called the Lake of Galilee, or the Lake of Tiberius, or the Sea of Galilee. Life in Galilee surrounds the lake. There are several hundred towns and villages in that area, but it is primarily an agrarian area.

For well over a year our Lord has been ministering in Galilee. By the time we get to chapter 10 and verse 1, He leaves that region and heads in to Judea and spends the final months of His ministry going through the towns and villages of the southern part, Judea, ending up in Jerusalem with a triumphal entry and then His crucifixion and resurrection and ascension.

He's about to leave Galilee. But before He leaves Galilee, He travels outside Israel with the Twelve. He crosses the border to the north and west of Israel and enters into Gentile territory. That is indicated in chapter 7 verse 24, He left, He went away from the region of Capernaum and Galilee to the region of Tyre, that would be modern-day Lebanon...modern-day Lebanon. He went with the

Twelve.

Why? This was to be their walking seminar, lasted several months. The whole idea was to spend isolated, non-stop time with the Twelve. They had affirmed already, you remember, from that night when they were on the sea and Jesus came walking in the water, they had affirmed, "You are God's Son."

Now that they had been brought to the point where they understood that He is the Son of God, that is their saving confession, it is time now for their intense private personal training. Up to this time, our Lord has spoken mainly to the crowds. Early on in His ministry He would teach the crowds and eventually He would speak to them in parables and because of their unbelief He wouldn't explain the parables to them, He would explain them only to the Twelve and His other disciples in private. Now it isn't just messages to the crowd explained to the disciples, it's time alone with the Twelve.

They have a formidable task. They will be the first generation of preachers of the gospel. They will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to do that. They will set in motion the proclamation of the salvation that is found only in Jesus Christ which will eventually stretch to the corners of the world. They need to be prepared and so this is their private, personal, walking seminar as they travel with Jesus for a number of months into Gentile regions where He is going to be able to isolate Himself from the busyness from around Galilee to have time with them uninterrupted.

When He arrives in Tyre, however, according to verse 24, He wanted to escape being noticed but couldn't. Came into town with twelve men, people in Tyre knew who He was. Mark 3:8 says, "People from Tyre had come to Galilee cause they had heard about Him and they came and they saw Him and they heard Him teach and do miracles. So they knew about Him. The crowds were not huge but when He reached Tyre He couldn't completely escape notice and at least one woman found Him because she had a demon-possessed daughter. And you remember the story, how He delivered that daughter and that woman exhibited great faith. Jesus called it in Matthew's gospel who gives the parallel account "great faith."

So He's now in this Gentile area in what today is Lebanon, north and west of the Galilee in the city of Tyre which is on the Mediterranean coast. After this, after His visit in Tyre, we pick the story up in verse 31, "He went from the region of Tyre and came through Sidon...came through Sidon. He's now moving directly north. Sidon is twenty miles north of Tyre, straight up the coast. There is no record that He taught there. There's no record that He healed anybody there. There's no record that He had any public presence there. It's possible because in John 21:25 it says that if all the things He did were written down, the books of the world couldn't contain them. We can assume that He had a divine purpose in going from Tyre to Sidon, we just don't have a record of what that was. But again, John says more is left out of the record even with four gospels than is included.

This again is important for Him because after going to Tyre, it says He moved from there, according to verse 31, through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee within the region of Decapolis. Now Decapolis is on the east of the Sea of Galilee and the south end. It's called Decapolis because it is a region with ten cities, Hellenized, Greek-influenced cities, pagan cities, heathen cities, non-Jewish cities, but is from the lower part of the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and south from there. So He's all the way to the northwest and He ends up all the way in the southeast of Galilee. And He takes that complete circuitous trip going way further north than one would need to go to get to the area of Decapolis for the purpose of extending the time in order that He might teach the Twelve personally. He visits on

His journey outlying areas of Galilee, Bethsaida, Caesarea, Philippi, way, way up on the north border between Israel and Lebanon, twenty-five miles north of the lake.

He doesn't come back into Capernaum. He doesn't come back on this trip into Galilee because He's engaged in private instruction with the disciples. And you see that at the end of chapter 9, we'll note that when we get there. This is prior to His leaving Galilee for the final time. The preparation of these men is critical. It was important that He get time with them. Herod Antipas was after Him and he was the one who beheaded John the Baptist and had no good intention for Jesus. The Pharisees and the scribes hated Him. The Pharisees and the scribes wanted Him dead, they were after Him. The intensity of Galilee posed a very serious threat to Him there. Shallow disciples who followed only His miracles and had no interest in His message had defected from Him and abandoned Him when He preached the great message in John 6 on the bread of life. The crowd in one moment had indifference toward Him, and in another moment wanted to force Him to be King. There were so many things converging on Him in Galilee that He needed isolated time with the Twelve...preparation time...crucial preparation time.

So, He leaves Capernaum, goes fifty miles north and west to Tyre, goes twenty miles north to Sidon and then takes a long loop even further north. The road east from Sidon would go over the little hillsides and then it would have to cross the Leontes River and then it would have to ascend the mountains of Lebanon which would be a rather arduous walk, all the way to the east and they would go east, way pass the Lake of Galilee into territory east of Galilee, down from the north to the southern part of the Sea of Galilee and they would enter Decapolis from the east, rather than from the north cause it says they came in to the midst of Decapolis. All of this time with His own. No mention of visiting cities or towns in Decapolis. This is just a walking seminar preparing them for their future ministry.

How do we know it was months that passed by? Because just prior to when He left Capernaum, days prior to when He left Capernaum, He had fed the vast multitude near Bethsaida. Remember that? That feeding is described in the sixth chapter of Mark. We estimate twenty-five thousand people were there. But it says that He told the people to sit down, you remember, on the green grass. Well in chapter 8 while He's in Decapolis, there's another multitude, this time a Gentile multitude and He will feed them. He will do the same thing again. He will create food for them. However, in verse 6 of chapter 8, He says to them, "Sit on the ground."

What's the difference between the green grass and the ground? You would know, you live in California. In the spring we get green grass. A few months later we get ground because the frail, fragile spring grass that pops up after the spring rains is gone within two months. And this is the indication that what was green grass at the feeding in the north end of the Sea of Galilee was just plain parched ground, a couple of months have passed for sure.

He comes then down and enters into Decapolis. The best we can discern, in about the middle of that area, He doesn't visit any towns in particular but makes His way to the edge of the Sea of Galilee. He would be exposed to heathenism. These were Hellenized, or Greek-influenced towns that made up the ten towns in that region. They were really under the power of the Syrian government. Remember now, Phoenicia, which is where Tyre and Sidon were, was annexed by a Roman general to Syria so it became Syrophenicia. Well Syrophenician rulers, Syrian rulers, also ruled all the way down into the Decapolis. So this is...this is Gentile territory. He would run into statues of Zeus and statues of Astarte, the Ashtaroah that they worshiped way over in Tyre, connected with Baal. He would have seen statues of Athene if He had visited the cities, statues of Artemis, Hercules, Dionysius a

drunken god of the Greeks, Demeter, etc. These are free Greek cities subject to the governor of the Syrophenician realm, though within the ancient territory of Israel, this was a Gentile, heathen, pagan area.

So the Lord was still then in Gentile land. Now when He went to Tyre, remember, He healed that Syrophenician woman's daughter from her demon possession, delivered her from her demon possession and we said last time that's an illustration of the purposes of God, saving purposes of God for the Gentiles, right? He commended her for her great faith. She believed in Him. She identified Him as Lord. She repented. So we see a Gentile conversion there which is important for us to understand because the purposes of God were always to save the Gentiles. Christ came to be the Savior of the world, the Redeemer of the world. He came first to Israel, but Israel was not the end of salvation but the means to carry the message of salvation to the rest of the world. So He is still in Gentile territory, still giving us a preview of the great commission when He sends His own into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature.

The area was outside, as I said, Herod's jurisdiction. It was really under Syrian rule. It would be close to the area south of it, but close to the area of Gerasa, or Gadara where Jesus had healed the man with the legion of demons in him, thousands of demons that our Lord sent into the pigs that went off the hill into the lake. People from that area knew about Jesus from the Decapolis. In Matthew 4 and verse 25 it says, "Many people came into Galilee to see Jesus from Decapolis." So His reputation had extended. We also know that when He healed that demoniac, He told him to tell the people in his region what He had done for that man. And that man responded, chapter 5 verse 20 of Mark, by going out and proclaiming what Christ had done for him through the region of Decapolis.

So when Jesus came to Decapolis, there were people who had already come to see Him from there and there was the testimony of this delivered demoniac that had preceded Him. So when He arrives He is not an unknown. And in order to give you the full picture, turn to Matthew 15...Matthew 15. This is the full picture. Here Matthew gives us a parallel look, same time, same place. But He doesn't tell the story Mark tells. That healing is only in Mark. There are three such incidents in Mark that don't appear in any other gospels and this is one of them. But Matthew sets the scene. Verse 29, Matthew 15, "Departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee having gone up on the mountain was sitting there." When He got to the Sea of Galilee through the middle of Decapolis, He found a hillside along the sea and there are many such. And He was sitting there, no doubt resting after a very long and arduous journey that would be somewhere between totally a hundred and twenty and a hundred and fifty, or a hundred and sixty miles. He sits down, which is easy to understand. However, large crowds came to Him. Literally, many crowds, multiple crowds, waves of crowds bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute and many others.

Guess what? These pagans living in Decapolis, worshiping their idols, had become very much aware of the powers of Jesus. From the experience of those who had crossed over into Israel and seen for themselves and from the testimony of the demoniac which was very convincing because everybody in the area would have known about Him. So they all come and they bring the lame, crippled, blind, mute and many other infirmities and they flung them down at His feet. He's at the foot of this hill somewhere on the slope and they just start throwing people at His feet with all these maladies, and He healed them...He healed them. He healed them, so verse 31 says, "The crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, the lame walking, the blind seeing. And here's the hint that makes us sure these were Gentiles, "They glorified the God of Israel."

Back in Matthew chapter 9 verse 8, when Jesus did miracles among the Jews, it says, "They glorified God....they glorified God." Here it says, "They glorified the God of Israel," not their god, the God of Israel whom they knew to be the power behind this man Jesus. So He comes, He begins this...this healing and everybody who is brought to Him is instantaneously healed to the degree that the people are absolutely astounded at His healing power and they actually go so far as to glorify the God of Israel. Believe me, they had never seen anything like this from any or all of their deities combined. They recognized that the God of Israel is a God of a completely different nature than theirs.

Now it is in that context that we come to Mark 7 because it is in that context that this miracle takes place. This is one of those who was thrown at His feet by friends and family, a deaf mute. And again, this is one of three accounts in Mark's gospel that appear nowhere else in the other three gospels.

Let's just break the story down. First we'll say, "Unable to speak...unable to speak." Verse 32, "They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty." They...meaning friends, family, unnamed people brought their friend, their friend that they cared about, that they loved and they had heard that Jesus could help people. And this is not the first person He healed that day, this is just one of the masses, so healings were going on the whole time. His malady was deafness. They didn't have any reservations about what Jesus was able to do, they were seeing it right before them. All they wanted to do was get their friend there and throw him down in front of Jesus so he could experience what the rest were experiencing. He was deaf and deafness when it's congenital or when it occurs by the age of two or three, always leaves an impediment in the speech because it's hard to form words if you can't hear words. And so it is normal who are congenitally deaf to struggle to speak when they cannot hear. And in that world, there were no remedies, there were no hearing aids, there were no sophisticated techniques for training people like that, nor was there any desire to do that. This kind of deafness is either congenital, or perhaps an infectious disease of which there were many in infancy, or in early childhood, had brought about this deafness. And when that occurs, there will be difficulty in speaking.

Even in Israel, and this is a sad reality, but even in Israel, deaf mutes were categorized with the insane because the rabbis said, "We have no way of knowing what they understand." They were not granted normal human rights. And in the Gentile world, it was worse. Who knows what life was like for this man or for all the others. The Jews would also heap on the person the fact that if they had that kind of malady they were under the curse of God and the judgment of God and it would be viewed by the Pharisees and Sadducees unclean because they were under divine judgment. We don't know what perspective all the Gentiles had, depending on what deities they worshiped, but these would be people who in any culture were outcasts, treated with disdain because it was virtually impossible to communicate with them, it was assumed that they had these limiting capacities mentally.

That was pretty common all through the world. I read this week that native Americans viewed deaf people as monsters and executed them. That would be true in other cultures as well. So it was a struggle to be deaf and to be unable to communicate. Much more of a struggle than to be blind cause you could still talk and hear and interact. A lifetime of stigma, a lifetime of sadness, a life time of rejection up to this point and his friends cared about him so they bring him to Jesus. They throw him...literally the verb is to fling him...at His feet and they implored Him, Jesus, verse 32, to lay His hand on him.

This is what He did. He put His hands on people when He healed them. You see that in chapter 1

verse 31, 41, chapter 5 verse 41, chapter 6 verse 5, chapter 8, we'll see it again verses 22 and 25, places in Matthew, places in Luke, He touched people. There's a tenderness in that, but also there's a recognition of the fact that He did not care for the assumed defilement idea. He was eager to touch these people which the Pharisees and scribes would view as a defiling act on His part. Touching a person like him was a way to express compassion and love.

So here we meet the man unable to speak...unable to speak. But in verse 35 he becomes an enabled to speak...he becomes enabled to speak. The Lord responds to this man's friends and to him as he is there at His feet. Verse 33, this is so wonderful, "Jesus took him aside from the crowd by himself." There's a heap of people there wanting to be healed. This man comes and Jesus takes the man aside from the crowd by himself. There is a crushing crowd. There is chaos. There is a din. There is all kinds of jostling going on. This is the man who has been ignored all his life. This is a man who has received scorn and disdain. This is a man who has not probably known this kind of personal care and attention from a total stranger in his whole life. Jesus took him aside, showing compassion, kindness. He's not just another face in the crowd to Jesus, he's a person and he's going to have time alone with Jesus, going to have his full concentration, going to have his full attention.

And then Jesus began to speak to him in his own version of sign language. They didn't have American sign language. Jesus has His own version of sign language and He communicates to him in sign language. Four signs that He uses. First of all, says, verse 33, "Put His finger into his ears." His fingers into his ears, both sides, What was He doing? He was identifying for the man what He knew about his problem. He wasn't insane. He wasn't a maniac. He couldn't hear, Jesus knew that and He wanted him to know that He not only knew that, but that He was about to heal that. A symbolic gesture to show the man what He was going to do.

Secondly, after spitting, He touched his tongue, implied, with the saliva and that said to the man, again I understand, you're not insane, you're not crazy, you're not mentally deficient, you have a speech problem and I'm going to fix that.

It's just beautiful gestures. That's not all. Verse 34, "Looking up to heaven." That's another sign. He's saying to the man, "What is about to happen to you comes from heaven." Everybody understood that. Everybody understood that, even pagans understood that the gods were above them, the gods were heavenly, the gods were supernatural. We can't assume that he knew anything about Jesus, nothing is indicated that he did. But Jesus wanted him to know that this power came from on high, this is not some magic trick that Jesus can do. And by the way, there were a lot of really phony healers running around in ancient times with all kinds of really bizarre concoctions.

I read about an ascription in Rome that required a three-day application of blood from a white rooster mixed with honey and salve to cure blindness. Blind people would try to apply these kinds of ridiculous remedies with no effect. Jesus had no interest in bogus things. He didn't want the attention to come to Himself. And so He looked up...this is a sign, this is a gesture to indicate to the blind (meant deaf) man that the power that's about to surge into his body is coming from God.

And then there's a fourth sign. "Looking up to heaven with a deep sigh." Now people who have difficulty hearing usually have heightened vision because they have to see, they have to read lips, they have to draw in all that they can visually if they can't get it in an auditory fashion. The man would see this. What is the deep sigh? An expression of sympathy, an expression of pain over the man's suffering and an expression of compassion, of tenderness, strong emotion showing that God

is going to come down in power and give him his hearing and give him his speech because God is compassionate. And so with sign language, Jesus gives him his first lesson about God. God is powerful and God is compassionate. He cares.

And if you study the life of our Lord Jesus, and you look through Matthew and Mark and Luke, you are constantly faced with statements about His compassion. He saw the multitudes and was moved with compassion. He saw this person and felt compassion. Matthew 9; 14; 15; 18, 20, Luke 7 and on it goes, this is the heart of God and this is why I've told you so many times that when Jesus came to demonstrate His deity, He did it through healing people because it also communicated the great compassion of God.

So, these are inescapable realities now in the man's mind, a compassionate power from heaven is going to change my situation, give me hearing and give me speech. And it happened. Verse 34, "He said to him, 'Ephphatha!' that is 'be opened.'" That's probably an Aramaic statement, verb. Some think it might be a Hebrew but the weight of evidence is on Aramaic which would have been the language Jesus spoke every day. "Ephphatha, be opened." The response was instant, absolutely instant. With a word out of His mouth, one verb, "Ephphatha!" the power came, verse 35 says, "His ears were opened and the impediment, the bond, the desmos, it's the word for chains that chain a prisoner, the chain of his tongue was broken and he began speaking plainly." In an instant he could hear perfectly and he could speak plainly.

Do you understand the extent of this? To hear is one thing, to be able to know that what you're hearing is language when you've never heard language is another miracle, right? There's no speech therapy here. He doesn't have to go to language class to learn Aramaic or Greek. He has full facility in the language that he's never heard. To hear it and understand it and speak it plainly...the word "plainly" in the Greek is orthos from which we get orthopedics, it means to straighten things out, correctly would be the right translation, to put something back to the correct alignment. He heard and spoke perfectly. No therapy, no learning curve, nobody had to teach him how to form the letters, form the words, nobody had to teach him what the words were. He received an instant facility in the language to hear it and speak it implanted in his brain. It's really stunning. No recovery period, but then there never is in Jesus' miracles. There's no progression here. He couldn't hear, now he hears. He couldn't speak, and now he speaks. And he hears perfectly and he speaks perfectly. This is staggering. The man unable to speak is now enabled to speak.

And then we come to a third point. He is unable not to speak. Now that he can speak, he can't hold it back. Verse 36, however, listen to this, "And He, Jesus, gave him orders not to tell anyone." Come on. I've never said anything in my life, now I have something to say and, I mean, what I have to say is just absolutely astonishing. What are You telling me? "Yeah, could you just not say anything about it?" That is an agonizing command which we wouldn't expect the man to obey, and he didn't. And, I mean, I've got to kind of go with him on this one, frankly. I just could never imagine any kind of human restraint that would keep him from telling everybody what had happened to him when he couldn't hear and he couldn't speak for his whole life. Now he's unable not to speak. Verse 36, "He gave them orders not to tell anyone, not the man, not his friends, don't tell anyone."

Now we're getting used to this, aren't we? We're getting used to this. In the gospel of Mark, chapter 1 verse 34, "Don't tell anyone." Chapter 1 verse 44, "Don't tell anyone." Chapter 3 verse 12, "Don't tell anyone." Chapter 5 verse 43, "Don't tell anyone." We'll see it in chapter 8 verse 26, "Don't tell anyone." And here we have it again, "Don't tell anyone." This seems such a strange command,

doesn't it? Especially in the light of the fact that back in chapter 5 when Jesus was in Gadara, Gerasa which is also in Gentile territory over in the same area and He healed the man who had the legion of demons, He said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you and how He had mercy on you," and the man went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him and everyone was amazed. He tells that man to tell everybody. He tells this man to tell nobody.

What's the difference here? How do we explain that? Explain that because the maniac was the first missionary to Decapolis. There...there had never been anybody to talk about Jesus there before. And it needed to be established who He was and what He could do and His power. But now it's reached epic proportions, massive crowds. In the next section, in chapter 8, there's going to be the feeding of four thousand men plus women and children, another massive, massive crowd. And all of a sudden, this simple knowledge about the Lord has exploded into the fact that the place is going crazy because He's a healer and a miracle worker. And Jesus has to slow that down if not grind it to a halt.

Why does He say, "Don't tell anyone?" Because, and we've said it before, because the message is not yet complete. Don't spread the message that I'm a healer and a miracle worker, that's not the whole story. It would be like you having one part of the gospel story that Jesus was born of a virgin, came into the world, did miracles and healed people and preached the Kingdom of God...and that's the story. That's not the story because it doesn't include...what?...the cross and it doesn't include the resurrection. That's the full story. So He says this again.

Now in Luke 9 verse 18, and I showed you this a few weeks ago, I'll do it again, Luke 9:18, He was praying alone. The disciples were with Him. He questioned them saying, "Who do people say that I am?" And they said, "You know, some say You're John the Baptist, others Elijah, others say You're one of the prophets of old who has risen again. And He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Peter said, 'You're the Christ of God.' And they all agreed. They all affirmed that He's the Christ of God. But He warned them and instructed them, 'Don't tell anybody.'"

What? "Don't tell anybody that I'm the Christ of God. Don't tell everybody that I'm a miracle worker and a healer."

Why? Next verse, verse 22, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, chief priests, scribes, be killed, be raised on the third day." The story's not complete until the crucifixion and the resurrection. After that, He gets them all together and says, "Go into all the world and preach this to everybody, right?" Got to have the full story.

Well, verse 36 says, "The more He ordered them," which means He kept repeating it, "the more widely they continued to proclaim it." Jesus still accomplished His intended purpose by letting His disciples know that they were not yet in possession of the full message and letting everybody who reads this know that that's not the full message. Even though they were disobedient, Jesus still established that point. And why were they so disobedient? Because verse 37 says, "They were utterly astonished. How could they possibly keep this in?" The word for "utterly astonished," one word in Greek, *huperperissos*...*huperperissos*, it's used only here in the New Testament. It is a compound word, very, very strong. It means "above all measure, over the top, superabundantly amazed and astonished." They had their minds blown in the vernacular. They're just completely amazed. They can't contain it. They cannot keep this in. So they spread it everywhere. And that's not the full story.

Their final comments wrap up our story in an incredible way. Verse 37, what did they say in their astonishment? Said two things. "He's done all things well. He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

I want to talk about those. The first thing they said was He has done all things well. He has done, perfect tense meaning continuously. Everything that He's ever done He's done well. Everything He's ever done He's done perfectly, literally. A rich adverb, kalos meaning rightly, correctly, appropriately. Everything He has done He has done perfectly. They're commenting on the perfection of His miracles. Look at the blind, they see. Look at the lame, they walk. Look at the deaf, they hear. Look at the mute, they talk. And it's perfect. They walk perfectly. They see perfectly. They hear perfectly. They speak perfectly. And the people who were sick, they're perfectly healthy. They're commenting on the perfection of His miracles.

And how did He do it? With a word, right? "Be opened...Be healed..." He literally spoke and it happened. Does that remind you of another text? It does me. Listen to this other text. Genesis 1:4, "God saw the light and saw that it was good." Verse 10, "God called the dry land earth and the gathering of the waters He called seas and God saw that it was good." Verse 12, "The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, trees bearing fruit with seed after their kind, and God saw that it was good." Verse 18, "He made the greater light and the lesser light, the sun and the moon to govern the day and the night and to separate the light from the darkness and God saw that it was good." Verse 21, "He made the sea monsters, every living creature that moves in the waters, every winged bird and God saw that it was good." Verse 25, "He made the beasts of the earth after their kind, the cattle after their kind, everything that creeps on the earth after its kind and God saw that it was good." And in verse 31, "God looked at all of it and said, 'It's not just good, it's very good.'" That's creation. That is creation. And it was perfect. Everything He made was perfect...absolutely perfect.

Jesus created new eyes, new ears, new voices, new legs, new arms, new organs, creatively by speaking them into existence the same way God created in Genesis 1 by the word of His mouth. "God said, 'Let there be light.' God said, 'Let the waters divide from the land.'" God spoke and it was created.

What does it say of Jesus in John 1, the Word, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." And then it says, "Everything that was made was made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." He is the Creator. And here we see Him creating. Every miracle was an act of creation, brought into existence by His Word, the same way He had created the universe to start with. And it was all absolutely perfect...perfect. He is the Creator.

The second thing they said, "He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak." It's interesting that Mark records that because there was a lot of healing going on that day...blind people, lame people, as well as deaf people and mute people. But the crowd used this word, "He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute, alaleos, alaleos. Laleo means to speak, a is the alpha privative, not to speak, speechless. He makes the speechless speak. That was the normal word. If you're going to refer to somebody who is mute, you would say alaleos. But Mark...that's what the people used, but Mark, back in verse 32, when he describes the man who spoke with difficulty, he uses a different word...it's a different word. It is the word mogilalon, mogilalon, very rare word. The only time it ever appears in the New Testament is right there. It's like Mark pulled it out of the air. There are many

references in the New Testament to being speechless or being mute. But one place you have this mogilalon word, it's a rare, rare word.

And Mark because he writes to Gentiles, only rarely refers to the Old Testament because they have no background in the Old Testament. But here he borrows this word. It is here in the New Testament and nowhere else, but it does occur once in the Old Testament. You say, "I thought the Old Testament was Hebrew." It is, but there's a Greek version of it called the Septuagint with which the writers of the New Testament were familiar and since they were also Greek speakers, they perhaps had read that. It's likely Mark had. Mark borrows the word mogilalon which appears only one time in the Old Testament and I want to show you where it is, Isaiah 35...Isaiah 35. Isaiah's prophecy is broken into two parts. The first part of his prophecy is about judgment. The second part of his prophecy is about salvation. The transition comes in chapter 35, the first part about judgment, judgment on Edom and Egypt and Tyre and Israel and Jerusalem. And the second part about salvation for Israel and even for the world through the coming of Messiah.

So in this chapter, chapter 35, you have a transition from judgment to salvation, from doom to hope, from sorrow to joy as salvation comes. And when salvation comes, when God brings the great salvation of Messiah to the world, and we're talking here about the great Millennial Kingdom of Christ when He comes to reign on earth, things are going to change. The wilderness and the desert will be glad. The arabah which is the desert, will rejoice and blossom like the crocus and blossom profusely. Rejoice with rejoicing and shouts of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it...oh that's Gentile territory, that territory of Syrophenicia under Syrian rule that swept all around the lake of Galilee around the land of Israel, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon, they will see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Those parts of the land will be included in the Kingdom and they'll be transformed in glorious ways.

Encourage the exhausted, strengthen the feeble, say to those with anxious hearts, take courage, fear not, your God will come with vengeance, the recompense of God will come but He will save you. God is coming in judgment but He's also coming with salvation. Look to the future, verse 5, and this is what will happen when the Messiah comes and establishes His glorious Kingdom on the earth. Not only will the desert blossom like a rose, like a crocus, not only will the land surrounding the nation of Israel flourish with beauty and majesty and see the glory of the Lord, but what also will happen, individuals will be touched. The eyes of the blind, verse 5, will be opened. The ears of the deaf will be unstopped. There will be massive healing in the Kingdom of Christ. The lame will leap like a deer and hear, the tongue of the mogilalon will shout for joy.

Wow, that's the eschaton, that's the final Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the word used there is mogilalon, those who cannot speak correctly, who cannot speak properly will shout for joy. This will encompass not only Israel, Carmel and Sharon, but Gentiles indicated by Lebanon. All kinds of things are going to happen. The scorched land will become a lake. Thirsty ground springs of water. A highway, verse 8, I love this, will be their roadway called the Highway of Holiness. Jew and Gentile are going to take the Highway of Holiness into the presence of the reigning Christ. It's really a magnificent picture.

When that great Kingdom of Messiah comes, with it will come changes in the land. Deserts will turn into flourishing forests. Streams and lakes will be everywhere where there's been nothing but dry ground. And there will be miraculous healings during the Kingdom of our Lord, those healings will mean the removal of blindness and deafness and inability to speak. The mogilalon will shout for joy. And all the ransom, Jew and Gentile, will take the Highway of Holiness into the presence of the King

of kings and Lord of lords.

Why did Mark use that word? Such an obscure and rare word? Why did he use that word? Why did he tell this story?

I think to touch the hem of the eschatological robe of Jesus and give us a preview of the Kingdom glory when men from every tongue and tribe and nation will gather into His Kingdom and Jew and Gentile will be healed of all their diseases. Gentiles included in the glorious Kingdom. What a picture.

Salvation is offered through our Lord Jesus Christ to everyone, Jew or Gentile. And in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. We come to Him by faith, in the gospel, the full message, not just that Jesus is a healer and a worker of miracles, but that He is a Redeemer who gave His life on the cross, paid the penalty for our sins, rose from the dead triumphantly as God endorsed Him by exalting Him to His right hand on His throne.

Have you received the Lord Jesus as your Savior? Have you confessed Him as your Lord? He will heal your soul now and one day your body. He has the power to do both.

Father, we thank You for the way the Scripture unfolds for us, subtle beauties. Thank You for the little things that sometimes can be so overlooked that open up huge vistas. We see in this story that You are the Creator. You spoke and creation occurred, just as it did in Genesis and it was perfect, just as it was originally. We see in this story the recognition that Your promise of a future Kingdom will be a promise of a time in this world when disease will be banished, infirmity will disappear, life will be long, peace and righteousness will reign and the blind will see and the lame will leap and the mute will shout. Here's a preview of that glorious day.

We thank You that there is in the atonement for all who believe in Christ spiritual healing and one day physical healing when we all enter Your presence and receive glorified bodies, like the very body of Christ after His resurrection. O Lord, again You put Your glory on display in unmistakable ways as our Creator, as our compassionate healer and more as our Redeemer and Savior. We confess You as Lord with grateful hearts in Your Son's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2017 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).