

Pentecost 16
September 13, 2015

“Jesus Opens Up Ears to Hear”

MARK 7:31-37

Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. ³² 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. ³³ After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. ³⁴ He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!"). ³⁵ At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. ³⁶ Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷ People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

The people were sure impressed at how Jesus opened the ears of a man who could not hear and touched his tongue so he could speak plainly. We are not told if this man was born deaf or he lost his hearing at some point in his life. Let's assume that he was born deaf. That means he could not hear the sounds we hear. That means he could not speak words. Strange sounds came from his mouth. Yet, when Jesus healed this man who was deaf, he was immediately able to hear sounds and recognize what they were. He was immediately able to speak words that were clearly understood by others. It says the crowd was overwhelmed with amazement. They said to each other, "He does everything well."

How can you not be amazed at the miracles of Jesus? Jesus fed over 5000 people with only five barley loaves and two small fish. They had more than enough to eat and there were twelve baskets left over. Jesus healed a man who never walked a day in his life. He jumps up and takes his mat and goes home. Jesus stills the storm on the Sea of Galilee. Immediately the stormy sea is turned into sea of glass.

Do you want even more evidence that Jesus does everything well? Then look at your own life. Here you are listening to the word of God. Your ears have been opened to listen to the Word. Your heart has been opened to believe the words are true. Your tongue is now singing God's praises. This morning we want to take a closer look at how **"Jesus Opens Our Ears to Hear."**

Jesus cares about people who cannot hear

Jesus certainly cares about people who cannot hear. We are told, "Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis." Here is Jesus going from one place where there was much darkness and unbelief into another place where there was just as much or even more darkness and unbelief. It was in a land of great darkness, the vicinity of Tyre, that Jesus met a Greek woman whose daughter was possessed by an evil spirit. She pleaded with Jesus to drive

the demon from her daughter. Jesus describes her as a woman of great faith. The region around the Sea of Galilee was also a land of great darkness and unbelief. It was here in this darkness that Jesus opened the ears of people to hear his message and also opened their hearts to believe.

We are told that some people brought to Jesus a man who was deaf and could hardly talk. They begged Jesus to place his hands on him and heal him. Here was a man who could not hear. Here was a man who had strange sounds coming out of his mouth when he tried to talk. One thing this man had going for him. He had people who cared about him and brought him to Jesus for healing. It sure is good to have Christian friends who care about you when you go through difficult times in life. It sure is a blessing to be part of a congregation where people regularly support and pray for people who have are going through difficult times.

Hearing loss was not just a problem with people at Jesus' time. It is still a problem with people today. It is estimated that there are 300 million people in the world today with some form of hearing loss. Some are born with a hearing loss. Others have their hearing damaged by sickness and disease or too much loud music blasted directly into the ears. It is not uncommon for people who are older to lose some of their hearing and find themselves having to wear hearing aids. This man lived in a world of total silence.

Notice now how Jesus takes this man aside to help him. It says that Jesus took him aside away from the crowd. Jesus had compassion on him. He felt compassion and love for this man who never heard the birds sing, never heard a dog bark, never heard his mother speak the words, "I love you." Can't you see this man trying to communicate to people with some form of sign language? If he tried to open his mouth to speak there were only strange sounds that frightened people and made them feel uncomfortable. Imagine being trapped in a place where there is no way to share your deeper feelings and emotions and needs with people.

We are told that before Jesus healed this man he looked up to heaven and then sighed deeply. Why did Jesus sigh deeply? Jesus sighed deeply because he has a deep compassion and feeling for the pain and suffering people go through in life because of Adam's fall into sin. Children are not born into this world with hearing losses because of anything their parents have done wrong or because of something they might do wrong in life. Sickness and illness and pain and suffering will come to all of us in this life not because of something we have done wrong, but because of the fall into sin that brought death and heartaches and sorrows into this life. The problems and troubles of life that we inherit because of Adam always underscore the far greater problem in life of sin that separates us from God. No one knows your current situation better than Jesus.

How many people living in your community or even in your family have ears that are closed to hearing God's Word? Jesus said of the people who rejected his teaching, "For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them." See the disobedient child put his hands over his ears so he does not have to listen to his mother speak to him. See the person still in unbelief holding their hands over their ears so they do not have to listen to what God says to them here in his Word. I was born into this world with ears that did

not want to hear God's Word. Only by God's grace can my ears long to hear God's Word proclaimed and taught to me.

Jesus opens ears to hear

Now we take a closer look at Jesus as he opens this man's ears to hear and touches his tongue so that he can speak. Jesus takes the man aside from the rest of the crowd. He wants him alone so this man can focus on what Jesus does for him. Some of the best moments in life come to us when we are alone with Jesus here in his Word, away from all the distractions that life brings to us.

It says that Jesus took his fingers and put them into the man's ears. Here is a man who cannot hear but he can see and he can feel. He can see the compassion and love on the face of Jesus as he looks up to heaven and sighs. He can feel the fingers of Jesus being placed into his ears. He can see Jesus spit as if he is putting something out of his mouth. He can feel the finger of Jesus touching his tongue. Here are the loving compassionate hands of Jesus demonstrating to this man who cannot hear and speak that a mighty miracle is about to happen.

Jesus looks up to heaven and sighs. The man cannot hear the sigh that comes from Jesus but he can see the expression on his face. With our eyes of faith we see the face of Jesus looking up to heaven and sighing. With our eyes of faith we see his face covered with sweat and blood as he prays fervently in the garden. With our eyes of faith we see the anguish on the face of Jesus as he bears the full wrath for our sin on the cross. With our eyes of faith we see the joy on the face of Jesus as he says to his disciples and to us on the night of his resurrection from the dead, "Peace be to you." And we will see the joy on the face of Jesus as he comes in clouds of glory to take us to the place he has prepared for us.

Jesus looks up to heaven, sighs and then says, "Ephatha!" which means "Be opened." What is the first word this man hears? It is the word that comes from the mouth of Jesus, "Ephatha." You see dear friends, it did not take minutes or even seconds for the miracle to happen. As soon as Jesus spoke these words the ears picked up the sound, the ear drum vibrated, the little bones in the middle ear began to shake and rattle. Vibrations were sent to tiny nerves on the inner ear that went to the brain. And the brain interpreted exactly what the sound was.

Imagine what it must have been like to hear sound for the first time. Suddenly you go from total silence to hearing sounds all around you. When we hear sounds we automatically filter them and categorize them with our brains. We recognize cars driving, dogs barking, children laughing and music playing. We also recognize words and understand their meaning. If I say, "Look at that cat out there!" immediately your brain would tell your eyes to look for a cat. That man knew what the words meant immediately. He did not have to learn what a bird sound was, or a child's voice, or a mother's voice. He was given hearing by Jesus and billions of bits of information that are stored in the brain for the process of hearing.

He was also spoke plainly. Listen to a little child making babbling sounds. They are mimicking vowel and consonant sounds they hear from Mom and Dad. Gradually their

amazing minds put pieces together in the form of words. That man was given a crash course in speech, a crash course that lasted only a split second. All the bits and pieces were there to speak plainly. He and his friends were told not to speak to other people about what had happened. Jesus did not want large crowds chasing after him for the wrong reasons. They could not keep silent. People were amazed and said, "He has done all things well."

Yes, Jesus has done all things well. In fact Jesus does all things perfectly. I wish I could say this morning that these wonderful ears the Lord has given to me have never listened to gossip or other words that are not proper for a child of God to hear. I wish my tongue always spoke good words to people, not harsh words. I wish I was quick to listen and slow to speak as the Word of God tells me in James. Yet, Jesus did all things well. He offered the perfect sacrifice at the cross that cleanses me from all sin, even sins of the ears and the tongue. This now allows me to use my ears to listen to his Word any my tongue to sing his praise. Amen.