



The Inestimable Jesus

September 24, 2023

Mark 7:31-37

Clint Pressley

*<sup>31</sup> Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. <sup>32</sup> And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. <sup>33</sup> And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. <sup>34</sup> And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." <sup>35</sup> And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. <sup>36</sup> And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. <sup>37</sup> And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."*

*(Pastor prays)*

If you were to take up the Bible and start reading, you would get to the New Testament. And when you get into the New Testament, you'll find that the first four books in the New Testament all tell the same story. We call them Gospels. It's the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and often times, if a new believer asks me where to start reading the Bible, I'll usually tell them start in John. Get the story of the Gospel from John first. John has written in a poetic transcendental style that takes us to the divinity of Jesus. We see him differently in John. The other three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are more down to Earth, and very similar to one another. In fact, they are called the Synoptic Gospels because they are synonymous. They are almost the same. Oftentimes you can read one story in Mark and then go over to Matthew, and there you find it's the same story told just a little bit differently. But now and then, each one of the gospel writers will turn aside and tell us a

story that none of the others mention. This story I just read to you is unique to Mark. Mark is the shortest gospel, and in his economic language, he has left a whole lot of stuff out but for some reason, Mark has decided to tell us this story. He gives us something that no other writer from the Bible does. Now when that happens, when you come up on something like that, we need to pay extra close attention because it is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Mark got his information from Peter, who was an eyewitness. Peter evidently convinced Mark to put this story in there. When you read it, you see that he is telling us something so special, so unique, so spectacular that, although the other writers didn't mention it, Mark had to tell it. He had to tell it so that you might be strengthened. So that you might be helped. So that you might be healed. So that you might be made whole. Look this story is here for you so that you will never, in fact, here's the theme of the sermon.

### **Never Underestimate the Saving Love of Jesus**

Here's what I want to do. Let's go back to the story. I've been looking at it all week, flipping it over front ways and back ways, and any kind of ways to figure out what is here. And what I want to do for the next few moments is just walk through it and point out a couple of things that I think you will find interesting and maybe helpful. Then we'll come back and in outline form, make some application and call that a sermon. Let's go back to verse 31. Join me there. The text says, <sup>31</sup> *Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis.* This is a circuitous route. What should have taken about 60 miles but it turns out to be 120 miles. If you were to lay this little route on a map, it would look like he is going the long way home. If you open up your maps on your GPS and you turn off the toll booths and highways and interstates, what should take you three hours ends up taking 9 hours. That's what's going on here. For some reason, Peter gives Mark the information that Jesus takes this strange route just to land back at that place called Decapolis. He has an appointment there. They brought to him a man and here comes the description in verse 32. <sup>32</sup> *And they brought to him a man who was deaf.* So he can't hear. Sometimes that word means can't hear and can't talk. But Mark is now stressing it. He's going

to use a phrase that is used nowhere else in the New Testament - *and had a speech impediment* - That literally means he talks with difficulty. Evidently something happened when he was younger and he lost his hearing. And the you get to where if you don't have hearing you, can't hear yourself speaking, so the speech gets difficult. This is the condition we find him in. *And they begged him to lay his hand on him.* It's interesting to me that in the passage they didn't ask Jesus to heal him. Now, obviously that's what they wanted. They wanted Jesus to heal him, but they just begged him to put his hand on him. It's interesting in verse 33. There are six steps in verse 33-35 and I will point them out to you. I find it strange that if you put this story up against the one we went over last week with the Syrophoenician woman and her daughter who had a demon. Jesus healed that little girl without going there and without saying a word. He just did it, he just thought it and it was done. But here is this elaborate step by step process, Jesus he treats each person differently. In verse 33 we see him taking the man aside from the crowd, privately. This was not an Instagram moment. He was not doing this so that everybody would see how powerful he was. His focus was on this man. He is doing it privately so that it wouldn't be a spectacle. The man has suffered enough in his life. Let's not make a spectacle out of him. So Jesus pulls him over to the side so that the man can have a face to face with Jesus, so he can see Jesus and Jesus can see him. It's interesting that he was pulled over privately. We can assume that there was an eyewitness, Peter was there. Peter was there on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter was there in the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter tells Mark the story and this feels a whole lot like somebody that was giving an eyewitness account. So the text says in verse 33, <sup>33</sup> *And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue.* Why did he put his fingers in his ears? That's where the problem is. The man can't hear, so Jesus communicates with him in a way he can understand. You have an issue, I'm gonna fix it right here. I see what your problem is. Not only that, this seems odd to me, he spit on his hand and put that on the man's tongue. So I tried to research and find out why he did that and every commentator had some sort of wild idea. Somebody said, well, you know, in that day and time, that's the

way a magic spell was done. Sometimes I'm reading commentaries and I think they just make stuff up. I'm just gonna write a commentary and this is what I think about it. I don't know why Jesus did that other than to say it's your ears and it's your mouth. I see what the problem is and I am going to fix it. *after spitting touched his tongue.* <sup>34</sup> *And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."* Looking up to heaven, this is the same thing he did in John 17, the high priestly prayer. Here Jesus is making sure that the deaf-mute man understands where this is coming from. This is not a magic trick. You understand that God is going to heal you. So he looks to heaven, to the Father. Jesus comes to give glory to the Father, to bring people to give glory to the Father. Why does he heal you? So that you might give glory to the Father. So he looks up to heaven and this is what makes it feel like an eyewitness account. The text says in verse 34 that he sighed. And I'm so glad that we have this detail. You have the personality and the emotions of Jesus and it becomes 3D for us. We, all of us understand this sigh. In fact that word is really he groaned. And after he did that in verse 34, he said to him *"Ephphatha,"*. Oftentimes Jesus would use an Aramaic word and Mark always translated it. *"Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* Here he tells us that Jesus said an Aramaic word and for his Greek readers, remember this is written for people that are in Rome, Mark is written for Roman Christians, Mark says, "What that means is "be opened". What's amazing to me is that Jesus is speaking and that word has to be heard to be effective. So when did it happen? He spoke and the man heard "be opened" and immediately, the text says, that his tongue was unshackled. It was unloosed. And they've never seen anything like that. He spoke plainly. Orthos, is where we get orthopedic. He spoke straight. What a miracle that your mouth had atrophied. You spoke with difficulty. Now it's straight. So Jesus knew how they were going to react. We find out how they react in verse 37. He tells them, look, don't tell. People will get the wrong idea. They want to have him be the miracle worker. Again, they want to rush and make him king. Jesus is coming, not for this, but to show that what he's doing has authority. That he's going to the cross. Don't tell. But you know how it is, the more you're told not to tell, you just tell it. And so the text says,

<sup>36</sup> *And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.* And in verse 37, they are astonished.

There's one time it says this in the New Testament. Astonished beyond measure. So here's astonishment one time in the whole New Testament. Mark gives us this word to say, it's beyond what you can count. This is what they said, something that sounds a lot like what you hear in Genesis 1 at creation, when God would create and he would step back from creation and say, "It is good." This is what they said, the new creation, he has done all things well. He **even** makes the deaf to hear and the mute speak. Now let's take a step back and start slow and see what it is we should never underestimate. Let me give the first one, #1.

### **Never underestimate the power of your testimony**

Never underestimate the power of you telling what God has done for you. Every one of us here, if you are a believer in Jesus, if you're a Christian, you are a trophy of God's grace and your testimony is telling how that trophy was won. How did it happen? Where I get that is from verse 31. Mark tells us the circuitous route that Jesus took in verse 31 and where he ends up. At the very end of verse 31, look where he lands, Decapolis. Decapolis is 10 cities. Alexander the Great put 10 Greek cities there, hoping they would flourish. They never really did. It's mostly a Gentile region. There's some Jews that live there, but that's not as important as the fact that we've heard this town before. The Decapolis is where Jesus went in Mark Chapter 5. Remember that man that was the known as the Gerasene Demoniac. He was not only possessed just one demon. There were so many inside of him that they had named themselves Legion. I had a football coach in college that was so mean that I called him Legion. He didn't have even one demon. But that man was filled with demons and Jesus cast the demons out of him and those demons went into the herd of swine. Those pigs ran down the hill and ran into the Sea of Galilee. And then when that happened, the people in Decapolis begged Jesus to leave. We don't want you here. But one person did. The man that was healed. And that man said to Jesus, please let me come with you. Please let me come with you. I want to come with you. Remember what Jesus told him

in Mark Chapter 5:19-20? Jesus says to him, look, go home to your friends and you tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you. So we find out verse 25 that he went away and he began to proclaim in the Decapolis. He began to proclaim how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled so much. Then, in our text today, Chapter 7:32, the friends knew to bring this death-mute to Jesus. Why? Because they had heard from that man who was healed from the demons what Jesus could do. What has Jesus done for you? Are you telling others what God has done for you in Jesus? Are you telling the blessings God has given you, or are you telling the mercy God has given you? Think of the mercy. Do people that know you know that you know Jesus? You need to make sure when you talk about Christ, you talk about the church, you talk about being a Christian, that you're not saying how good you are. You are saying how bad you were and Christ saved you. That you are a sinner separated from God. God in his mercy gives us Jesus, who lived perfectly, and died on the cross for us. God raised him from the dead. You believed that and it changed you. Never underestimate the power of your testimony. Let me give you another thing. Let's pick up speed a little bit. Here's the second thing #2

### **Never underestimate your ministry**

Let me show where I get that in verse 32. <sup>31</sup> *Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis.* <sup>32</sup> *And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him.* Who is the they? They brought this man, he's going to be healed. But he wouldn't have been healed if they hadn't done the work. They're friends of this deaf-mute. They couldn't fix him. They knew Jesus could, so they brought him. Not only that, they are anonymous. They didn't have their picture made and turned into a poster to put on the wall saying look how great they are. We don't know who they are. All we know is that somebody took the time to go the extra mile to make sure that deaf-mute got to Jesus. I mean, why do we do the ministries we do around here? We are starting an addiction ministry. Believe in an exchange where Christ takes sin and gives righteousness. Why are we

doing missions? Because we believe that people need to know what we do. Something that sounds as silly as trunk or treat, can be a tool. This building can be an intimidating place. It's easier for people to say, well, I don't want to go to a big church. And what we do at Hickory Grove with your ministry is make the big church a place where you can be connected. That relationship we make can make sure we take every barrier and knock it down and have the gospel stand tall so we can point people to Christ and to let them know what it means to be a part of this church. And here it's an anonymous person, maybe two or three people. They took this man, and what they cared about was getting him to Jesus. Never underestimate the power of your ministry. I'm gonna give you something else about verse 32. Here's a third one.

### **Never underestimate effective prayer**

Verse 32 tells us they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment. That phrase speech impediment, you won't find that anywhere else in the New Testament. It really means he's got trouble talking. He couldn't talk, but his friends could. And the text says in verse 32 that they brought him to Jesus and they are begging, *Perakaleo*, it means to call out. And they kept doing it over and over again. They were asking Jesus to intercede on behalf of this person. Look, you need to find a person that is deaf to the gospel and can't speak the name of Jesus and you need to intercede for that person. You can write their name down in the back of your Bible, or maybe in the front, or in your prayer journal. Ask God to heal and don't stop doing it. Here are friends that brought this deaf-mute to Jesus. And they, on behalf of their friend, went to Jesus and asked. What are you asking? What are you asking for your friend? Or are you asking for the person that you work out with or that you work with, or that you see at school? What are you asking for?

Let's go to Jesus now. We've looked at that man. Let's go to Jesus. #4.

### **Never underestimate the person of Jesus**

The Book of Mark is written in an effort to have the Roman Christians get a deeper understanding of who Jesus is. So we keep that in mind every time we read verse 32. I want you to pay very close attention. You probably already

saw it. If you have a study Bible, it might be at the at the bottom in the apparatus. Verse 32 will have a little letter by it and down at the bottom will be a passage. Don't get ahead of me. I want you to pay close attention to the description of the man. He is a deaf. See it? Verse 32, <sup>32</sup> *And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him.* If you're reading that in Greek. It means he has difficulty speaking. It's a really unusual phrase. In fact, you can flip all the way through the New Testament and you'll never find it again. So you start thinking why did Mark use that phrase? But if you're reading not just the Greek New Testament but also the Greek Old Testament, it's called the Septuagint you would come upon the prophecy written by Isaiah as he's looking forward to the future when the Messiah would come. And in the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 35:5-6 this is what Isaiah says. Looking forward to when the Messiah would come. *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; <sup>6</sup> then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.* This is the same word. Isaiah said the tongue of the one who has difficulty talking. He will sing for joy. Mark reached over into the Old Testament and brought that word forward so that we might understand who it is he's talking about. This passage speaks of the Messiah. Mark intentionally used that word to tell us that the promised Messiah is here. That the one who can save you and deliver you is here. Jesus Christ.

What is the gospel when we talk about the gospel at Hickory Grove? There is a very specific thing that we mean. Not just that Jesus has come, we mean that Jesus has come to save us because we need saving. The Bible says that God is the creator who created you in his image. But the image of God in you is disfigured because of sin. It's not just the environment, not just the world we live in, but inside of you. You have a propensity to do things that are offensive to God. Nobody here would say I'm not a sinner. We would all agree that we sin. The Bible teaches us that sin is a crime against God and God is a judge who must give justice. Justice means that the crime is so severe that the punishment is death. It's so severe and it's so painful that God, who is also merciful and love, gives us Jesus. Here's the Gospel. Jesus came to live in a



way we can't live. He lived perfectly. Jesus came and at the cross, took the punishment that humans, like you and me deserve. God put that on Jesus. He was crucified on the cross, buried in a tomb, and we know that God received his sacrifice and our punishment was satisfied. Justice is satisfied because God raised Jesus from the dead on a Sunday. That's why we worship on Sunday. Jesus has ascended into heaven. The apostles started preaching, the church started growing and the message is, if you will believe that, and turn from your sin, you will be saved. Never underestimate the person of Jesus. Let's get to the next point, #5.

### **Never underestimate the power of Jesus**

I get that from verses 33-35. It's my favorite part. I've been looking at it all week. I don't know why Jesus healed the Syrophenician woman's daughter with a thought, but then goes through six steps in the miracle in verse 33. Jesus takes the man aside, away from the crowd, privately one-on-one. This is personal lordship. This is you. Jesus is taking him aside privately, not as a spectacle, not for people to see. He takes him aside so that there can be focus. Christianity is something very personal. Here's Jesus the Savior, saving an individual. He takes him aside and it is private. Not only that, there are six steps. He takes the man aside, privately. He put his fingers in the man's ears. Jesus communicates in a way that man could understand. It's very clear where the problem is, where the brokenness is, and I'm going to fix it. I'm going to fix your tongue and your ears. So he put his fingers in his ears and put his hand on his tongue. In verses 33-34, he looked up to heaven. So this is going to be something that glorifies God. It's not a magic trick. This is God working to heal. I think the most endearing word here in this passage, the thing that makes it so much like an eyewitness account and makes me love Jesus more is that he *sighed*. He groaned. Every time you see Jesus doing that, it's always him facing the effects of the fall. It's always him facing the brokenness of humanity. You see it when you find them outside of Lazarus tomb and everybody's crying. And when the guard of Gethsemane groaned under the pressure. When he looked down at the crowd, the text says he has compassion. Even Paul takes this word and says, sometimes we are praying so

deeply that we groan. It's hope giving to me that Jesus looked at this man and he sees the effects of the fall. He sees the anguish that man has been in. And after looking up into heaven, he sighs. The text says that he said to him in Aramaic. I don't know why Aramaic, Mark is writing to a Roman audience. They speak Greek. But Jesus spoke in Aramaic, "*Ephphatha*,". That word, Mark tells, means be open. What's interesting to me is that he said it and the ears had to work. He creates what he commands. He commands it to happen and it does. Just like Genesis 1 & 2, let there be light and there's light. He spoke and it happened. And the text says here that not only were they open, but look at the language. The language says that that his tongue was unshackled, it was unfettered. It had been closed down. And what Christ does is set it free. Now look, I'm just going to allegorize it. The truth of the matter is you are shackled, and when Christ speaks, he frees you. He creates a free person. Never underestimate the power of Jesus. Let me give you one last one.

### **Never underestimate the perfection of Jesus**

So Jesus does this miracle. They brought the deaf-mute man to him and he's obviously been talked to about the Messiah. Mark uses the word that Isaiah used. He heals this man. It is an astounding thing. Before we even find out what their reaction was, verse 36 tells us that he says to them, I don't want you talking about this because he knew they would see him as a king. They tried to make him king but this miracle is to show that what I'm going to do has authority. But of course they are talking about it. And verse 36 says, the more he told them not to, the more they did.

And then there's this wonderful summary in verse 37. Verse 37 has echoes of Genesis 1 when God would create and then step back and say it is good. Verse 37 tells us, *And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."* He has done all things well. If God said it was good at creation, here is the new creation. The Bible says that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. I would have liked this passage to have ended with the phrase he has done all

things well. In fact, I would have kept it in the King James version that says he hath done all things well. But that is not what Mark does. In fact, Ray Ortlund, a Presbyterian Pastor, looked at this and he said the most important word in this entire passage is the word **even**. *“He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”* He has done all things well. He even saves the adulterer. He even forgives the pornographer. He even saves the homosexual. He even heals the abuser. He even takes away hatred. He even makes those that have been abused whole. He even reverses the prodigal that denies him. He even will save you. This morning come to the healing, saving, forgiving, restoring, Jesus. Never underestimate the power and the saving love of Jesus.

*(Pastor prays)*