

Sermon Transcript for August 22, 2021

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus is in the region of Tyre and went through Sidon into the Sea of Galilee to the region of the Decapolis. If Decapolis does not sound quite like a Jewish city name, you would be correct. This is not a Jewish town, by and large. This is a Roman community. The Decapolis was literally built by the Romans in the Sea of Galilee. So, this is not a Jewish town. In other words, Jesus is not really in a Jewish place, say, He's in foreign country.

And the odd thing about Jesus is, when He preaches, a good part of His ministry is up there in that Sea of Galilee region, half of which is not even Jewish. You got the Samaritans who are up in there at that area. There's a massive Roman population. There are Jewish people in that whole area, but it's a mixed group of people.

So from the very beginning, even to the places where Jesus speaks, we have this image that He desires for all people to know His Word and to hear His message. And Mark in particular points this out, and he has this impression it seems of this ongoing revelation of Jesus. Jesus doesn't want to reveal a whole lot about Himself until it's the right time for it to be revealed. So that's part of the reason why He tells people, "Look, don't say anything until I'm ready for it," because He doesn't want people following after Him because He is a "miracle worker." Now that may seem odd. Jesus really does not want us to follow Him because He's a miracle worker. He doesn't want us to be so enamored with the miraculous signs that He does that that's where we put our focus and that's where we put our faith. And Jesus did amazing and marvelous things. He walked on water. He caused a storm to be stilled. He healed the deaf, the lame, the mute. He even raised people from the dead. But the whole point of this was not that we might look to those particular miracles, but that we might see the whole picture, His words, and why He was doing these signs.

And we get an inkling of that from what happens when He interacts with this deaf and speech impediment person. He's getting real physical and tangible with this man. He sticks His fingers into his ears. He spits, I don't know where. Maybe He spits on His hand, you know like when you're getting ready to do a task. That's the common cartoon. You're getting something done. We're not even certain if that's what He did, but He did something. He was very physical and tangible. We have a God who is close to us. We have a God who has come to be with us, to touch us, and to interact with us and in a very tangible way. And He does it with this man.

Now notice He takes the man away from the crowd privately. Remember we're in the Decapolis. This is not a Jewish community, and so their image of a miracle worker is very different from the image of the Jewish people. In a Jewish mindset, miracle workers come from God. They're prophets. They're people who have a message from God. In the Latin community, a miracle worker is a magician or possibly one of the gods come down and pretending to be a human. So it seems that Jesus takes this man away privately, to prevent a false narrative taking place, that this is some magician who has magic powers. If you just tap into the right source, he's... You can imagine.

So He takes him aside privately, and then He speaks these words. But before He speaks these words, it says that He looked up to Heaven and He sighed. Now these words don't seem very important in the text, but as I've been looking at them and thinking about them, these really seem to be the key of what's going on. He looked up to heaven. So we have this image of Jesus Christ. It's not that Jesus is going by His own authority and by His own ideas. But we have this image of the Trinity, that Jesus Christ is here on earth, doing the will of

the Trinity, that the Trinity is in unity. And not only in essence, in who they are as God, but also in purpose. The purpose is that Jesus might be our substitute before the heavenly Father, that He might pay the price of our sin and of the corruption of this world.

And so He looks to Heaven and the ESV says "He sighed," but the Greek word is much deeper. It's a groan. It's like a heavy burden is being instigated here, like "HHUUUU". Jesus is taking on some weight, some heft. And in fact, that is exactly what it is. Every time Jesus does one of these miracles, He is actively moving to the cross, because He is actively taking up the sin and the corruption of this world that rightfully deserves the wrath of God and yet He is taking it upon himself. So you can almost feel Jesus taking upon himself the weight of a world that caused this man to be deaf and have his speech impediment. He's taking upon himself, the corruption of this world. It's as if, "UUGHH," that first time, when you do something that is difficult, you're like, "Oh man, whew!". And then you steel yourself up for it and then you go and do the task.

And you have Jesus doing this a couple of times, especially in the book of Mark. When He raises the young man from the dead, you have that same sense of groaning. And you also have that same idea. This man died because of sin. Sin is the reason death comes into the world, in general. So He died because there is sin in the world and Jesus raises him to life. In other words, He's saying, "Okay, sin caused this death, however, I am taking that sin upon Myself and giving life to this young man."

And so He groans with the weight of the sins and corruption of the world, which is going to lead Him to the cross. He is going to take all the sins of the world, He has taken it upon himself and He is going to pay the price and get rid of it. Here we have Him groaning with the weight of the sins and the corruption upon Him.

And then He speaks these words "Ephphatha." Now notice, He is not speaking to God, God, please heal this person. No, what He says is, "Be opened." So He is physically connecting Himself with this man's corruption and saying I have authority over this, but not just this, over everything. And so when He did that, his tongue was released, his ears were opened. So by the mere speaking of the Word, the Word of God caused the man's lips and tongue to be useful again and caused the man's ears to function again.

So what's most important in this story, in this event, this historic event, is the Word of God. See that's what Jesus wants us to put our trust in, His Word. The miracles are marvelous, but the fact of the matter is these miracles are in essence, temporary. Suffering is still going to face this man and everybody else, they're still going to have to face tribulations in the world that they live in. They're still going to face death, the physical death. And so the miracles that Jesus did were temporary solutions to a temporary problem.

His Words though, His Words and His actions on the cross, those are the solution to the eternal problem of sin in this world. And so faith comes from hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ. It's the Word of God. And that's why He took him off to the side. He wanted them to focus on the Word of God, not, "Oh, what a wonderful miracle this is and let's go chase after Him, He's going to do more miracles." Even if He didn't do any miracles, we would still trust in Him. His Word is true. And His Word has said, your sins are forgiven.

And not only that, He said that His words heal. He also promises that all suffering and trials that we face in this world will be dealt with in the end. Not just our physical suffering, but also the suffering that comes from the scoffers and the ruthless and those who watch to do evil and who seek to deceive and make empty pleas and set a snare. All these evil people that seem to be succeeding in the world. All the evil that we seem to face is also solved in the Word of God. We can trust that even though it seems that evil is succeeding, we still have hope, because His Word has promised us not just temporary healing, but eternal healing in Christ our Lord. So that we can stand firm, and trust that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

And so, the job at hand for us is to hear this Word and to believe it, but then to be eager to spread the message. To be eager that God might use us, not as miracle workers, because the miracles don't last, but as not just hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word and speakers of the Word, so that others might hear and believe.

So let our lives be one of joyful thanksgiving that we have heard the Word of God. And then that Word has cleansed us from all unrighteousness and healed us from our sin and given us the promise and the assurance and the confidence of life everlasting in His name, through His Word, because His Word has power, not just to make somebody's ear hear, but to bring somebody from death to life, to life eternal in Jesus Christ.

May grace and mercy and peace be and abide with you always, unto life everlasting. Amen.