

**Mark 7: 31-37; "Ephphatha - That is, Be Opened", Sermon # 44 in the series - "Astonished at His Teaching", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall On July 19th, 2009, in the Morning Worship Service.**

There are lessons to be learned from every one of our Lord's blessed miracles. That is why each one of them should be preached from and thought upon. It is so that what Christ did for those in need, would be carefully brought to light, and so that we might be instructed by our Lord's example. We want to know how He ministered to people, so that we might learn how to minister to others in His name. We do not have the ability in ourselves to help a single soul without the grace and the blessing of God, but with knowledge of what Jesus was like and what He did in His ministry, much good can be done for others, and God will be praised and glorified. God uses the knowledge of Christ, and our compassionate observation of others, in our learning to minister for Him. We know that doctors and surgeons have received much good knowledge and practical teaching, so that they will be able to apply that learning to the way that they minister to those in great physical need; so that they might help them back to a healthy state. And so why cannot we, then, also try to learn more; the ways of Jesus in His healing ministry, and apply them to the way that we go about trying to help people, spiritually and physically, around us? I think that there is much that we can learn from this text in this regard. We do not have a license to practice medicine, but we do have a command to preach the gospel to every creature. We do have the command given to us from the Lord Jesus, that we would "let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven." So this morning I would like to set before you 4 ways that you, as a Christian, can help forward the saving, healing ministry of Jesus to needy people around you. The 1st way is by bringing needy people around you, to Him. The 2nd way is by showing them the sympathy of the Lord Jesus. The 3rd way is by believing in Jesus' power to instantaneously change a heart or a life. And the 4th is to proclaim that He does all things well.

**The 1st way that you can help forward the saving, healing ministry of Jesus to needy people around you is to bring them to Him.** (Verses 31 and 32)

"Again departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee." "Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him." This is the essence of Christian ministry; bringing people to Jesus. These people in this region knew of the power of Jesus to heal, and so they brought Him this difficult case of this deaf man, who also could not speak clearly or distinctly. They knew that this man could not help himself or change his condition, but they believed that Jesus could, and so they brought him to Him. They believed that if Jesus would simply put his hand on this man; that if Jesus

was willing, that He certainly was able to heal this man of his great disability. This is the kind of faith that Jesus responds to; the faith that brings the needs of others to His attention. This kind of faith knows how to beg on behalf of others. To bring people to Jesus is to be praying for people around you; for their highest welfare; and even their eternal welfare. This is one of the ways that we bring people to Jesus today. We cannot bring them to Him physically, but we can bring them to Him spiritually, for He is very much alive; having been raised from the dead, He is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Let us learn to bring people to Jesus in prayer, if we haven't done it much before. It is always good in the sight of God that people are presented with Jesus' ability to make them whole, complete, and eternally happy. And people who have this kind of faith in our day should not feel that they are limited to their asking and begging only for the physical needs of people. They are also concerned with the spiritual welfare of people around them just as much, if not more so, than for their physically being made well and whole. We know, if we read our Bibles, that there are people all around us who cannot hear spiritually. There are people all around us every day, who are deaf to spiritual truth; they are deaf to all the expectations that God has of them as people. Most people are not physically so deaf that they cannot hear the gospel, but there are many who are spiritually unable to hear the truth of God's word and receive it, because there is something blocking it, in their mind and heart. That impediment is, that they are spiritually deaf to the voice of both the law and the gospel. It is a spiritual inability. Jesus says of the Pharisees who were trying to disqualify His ministry and to bring Him into dishonor and disgrace in the eyes of the people who He was preaching to in John 8: 42, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me." "Why do you not understand My speech?" "Because you are not able to listen to My word." (Not able to hear His word, it says in the KJV) And in John 8: 46, He says again, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" "And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?" "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." They had this great spiritual infirmity; the impediment of spiritual deafness, but would not admit it. This is how people are without the grace of God at work in their hearts and lives. When people are deaf spiritually, they do not understand that they will most certainly face God at the Judgment Day and their life will be evaluated. They have not really heard that this life is the only time of preparation for such a Day and such a meeting, and they will not be prepared to meet Him and have Him do this evaluation of their life, because they really have never been touched by Christ who brings to the deaf sinner the reality of God doing a work of grace in their hearts to take away this impediment that blocks their mind and heart. Only Christ can give a person ears to hear the warnings and threatenings of the Law, and the sweet words of Christ in the gospel promising them grace which will save their souls. You and I must learn to pray for them that this spiritual impediment would be removed. These Pharisees did not want to admit their deafness, but this man

willingly was brought to Jesus so that He could heal him. There are people who are made willing by the Lord's power to come and sit under the Word, and thus be brought close to Jesus. We must be on the look out to think about who we could bring, and invite them to come with us. In most cases we realize that people around us have physical ears that can hear, and so there isn't any reason why we can't bring them to Jesus by bringing them to the place where He manifests His saving power. When people are coming to church they are at least outwardly hearing the words of eternal life. The impediment might not yet be removed, but it is at church, in the preaching of the word, where Christ manifests Himself to His people and to sinners who have never heard with ears of faith. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word concerning Christ," it says in Roman 10: 17. "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" So to inwardly come to hear they often must be brought to the place where they can outwardly hear; and to inwardly hear they must have the ability to hear given to them by Christ. And then they shall be saved from their sins, come to know God, and praise Him for His wonderful works.

**2ndly - The 2nd way that we can forward the saving, healing ministry of Jesus to needy people around us, is by showing them the humility and the sympathy of the Lord Jesus.** (Verses 33 and 34a)

"And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue." "Then looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.'" It was Christ's humility to take this man aside from the multitude. It was not as though He did not have the ability to do this miracle before all the people, as He had done many times. It was rather, that in this instance, He did not want to do this miracle from the wrong motive, which would be to do it for the applause of men; to do it just to show that He could do it. This would not be bringing glory to God, but rather simply impressing men with His power. Both He and His Father had higher goals. It was that the message of the gospel would be attested by the power of this miracle and that some would then come to saving faith in Christ because of it. This is how you and I, also, are to go about doing our good works. It is not so that we might be seen of men so that they might be impressed with us. It is so that they would believe in God, praise God, and come to be His servants forever. Christ's kingdom, cause, and glory are not advanced by fleshly displays of power. It is "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord," that the temple of the Lord is built, and glory comes to God. We are not to so let our light shine that people see our good works and praise us here upon the earth. We let our light shine in such a way that people see our good works, but they then glorify; they praise, the Father in heaven. It is by true humility that Christ's kingdom advances and people are truly helped. The Father who sees in secret will reward us openly. Sometimes the greatest miracles are better done by the Lord "taking a person aside". I suppose it would please all of us to know most definitely of the Lord's work prospering among us, so

that we could see it going on before our eyes. But the Lord knows that it is no doubt often better for a person to be healed or for faith to be conceived; not before the prying eyes of many people, but when He and they are alone, or only with a few people. Jesus often did this in some of His greatest miracles. The raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead in Luke 8: 51; He put them all outside, and just took James, and Peter and John, and the parents with Him into the room where she lay. He knew that this would glorify God more than a great display of His power in front of the many mourners there that day. In John 5: 44, Jesus says, "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" Let us be those who seek the honor that comes from God so that others will believe.

Jesus was also very personally sympathetic to the man who had these problems of deafness and inability to speak. Before He performed the miracle He put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue." "Then looking up to heaven, He sighed...." Jesus was very personally sympathizing with this man's condition and was telling him in a personal way, with a form of sign language, what He was going to do for him. "These ears are going to be unplugged so that you can hear." "This tongue which has so much trouble with stuttering and stumbling over itself; I will loose the string that binds it." I believe that Jesus' sighing was his identification with all the years that this man had to endure this disability; He could understand how difficult it had been; how awkward, and frustrating, and even anguishing. The Lord Jesus knew this man's every physical weakness and what it meant for him to have to endure the maddening frustration of not being able to hear and not being able to speak, and He was showing the man that He sympathized with him, and was going to do what He alone could do in that situation. He would heal Him. We should learn from this that the Lord Jesus is a Savior who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities", both physical and spiritual. This is why He is so well able to minister to all persons who come to Him with their sins and their problems. This is why we can come to Him and why we can encourage others to come to Him. He is able to save to the uttermost, those who come to God through Him, since He always live to make intercession for them." Part of His holy work in intercession is being able to sympathize with those who come to Him with their problems; His great willingness to show compassion and to be their helper in and through His extending grace to them.

Since those of us who have known Christ for awhile know this; it ought to lead us to be able to show this same kind of sympathy to people around us who have physical and spiritual needs. How do we minister to them? We minister to them by learning to sympathize with them and by showing them that we care for them personally. We learn to sigh over their condition, and in our spirit. We pray in our spirit, to God, to know what we can do to help them to bear up under difficulties and trials and how to be able to tell them where they can find grace and help in their time of need. We may not be able to personally heal them, but we can personally look at them, trying hard to understand what their experience has been,

what difficulties they have experienced, and listening to them with a view to show them something of Christ in our words and actions toward them. And after showing sympathy, then we should also show compassion toward them; the compassion that asks yourself and the Lord, "What can I do for this person?" "What should I do for this person?" You can be sure that Christ will answer a question like this, by bringing to your mind something that you can do for them. This is what good works are all about. It is a good work to give needy sinners the gospel. It is a good work to as Paul says in Acts 20: 35, "labor with your hands, so that you might support the weak." "And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

**The 3rd way that you can help forward the saving, healing ministry of Jesus is by believing in Jesus' power to instantaneously change a heart or a life.** (Verses 34 and 35)

"Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.'" "Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly." This man's whole life was changed immediately and instantaneously. We are living in a day when many people, when they think of seeing help come to other people, only see it in terms of a process of people doing things for other people. They do not speak about God being in the picture at all. They tend to want to downplay the idea of miracles happening, and God intervening miraculously and instantaneously, to save people's souls, or to heal their bodies. Thomas Jefferson was like this. He published his own New Testament, having removed all the miracles from it. It made much more sense to him that way. But if a person has come to know Jesus Christ; has had Him enter their heart and convince them of their sin and need of Him, and then has revealed Himself to them by His powerful grace and presence; this kind of thinking simply will not do. Will you not understand this morning that if you have been converted to Christ; His entering your heart to regenerate it took place in a moment of time? It was instantaneous. You may not have been able to pin-point the time of it, when it took place for you, but it happened. You experienced the New Birth spiritually in a moment of time, and it was a miracle of Christ's doing just as surely as this man's receiving the ability to hear and to speak. If you have believed in Jesus, the beginning of your faith was an instantaneous conception and birth performed by the Holy Spirit. When Christ came into your heart and life He had many ways of showing you that He had given you birth. He was right there in your heart, teaching you and leading you, and He made you know that He was there. His power and His presence convinced you that His word was true and you began to read it, and live by it, and you followed Him in this way that He proscribed. It was He Himself who opened your ears to hear and to listen as a disciple and to be able to speak to Him in praise. It was He who did the miracle of God so that praise might be formed upon your lips, and you could then come to speak clearly about our experience. He can do this, and we need to believe it. He can do it instantaneously. He doesn't always work in such a way that we can

speaking clearly about our experience instantaneously, but we ought always to believe that He saved us in a certain moment of time, and He can certainly do His work so that we can speak plainly of it. When He does a miracle in our hearts to change our hearts, raising them from the dead, and giving us ears to hear what His Spirit is saying to us through His word we should also want to speak to others about this so that God will be glorified and Christ's kingdom furthered. Let your lips speak of the miracle that He did for you.

**And then finally - There is another thing that you can do to forward Christ's saving, healing ministry to needy people; and that is that you tell them that He does all things well.** (Verses 36 and 37)

Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it." "And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, 'He has done all things well.'" "He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak." Now what are we to think of this disobedience to Christ's express command to this man and his friends, that they should tell no one? Was it holy or unholy disobedience? Can any disobedience of Christ's command be holy? I like what John Gill says in his commentary on this. He says, "The man that had his hearing and speech restored to him, and those that brought him, and as many as were witnesses of the miracle: that they should tell no one; of the cure that was wrought, being not desirous of the applause of men; and knowing it would bring upon Him the envy of the Scribes and Pharisees; and be a means of putting the common people upon setting Him up as a temporal king, such as they expected the Messiah would: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; or spoke of Him, as the Ethiopic version reads it; for they looked upon his charge merely to proceed from modesty, and that made them the more forward to speak of his greatness and in his praise, to publish His mighty works, and spread the fame of his miracles far and near." "So such who have received the grace of God, are become acquainted with Christ, and have a real experience of divine things, cannot but speak of them; they are like new wine which hath no vent; and are ready to burst like new bottles; to forbear speaking is a pain, and weariness to them; nay, they think, should they hold their peace, the stones in walls would cry out." "Wherefore, partly for the glory of God, the magnifying of the riches of His grace, and the honor of Christ, and the blessed Spirit; and partly to show their own sense of things, the gratitude of their minds, and the thankfulness of their hearts, as well as for the use, comfort, edification, and instruction of others, they must speak, and cannot be silent, whatever restraints are laid upon them." I think that this is wonderfully said. When you think of all that Jesus has done for you, in going to the cross and dying for your sins; when you think of all that He continues to do every day for you by His grace; transforming you into His own blessed image, then how could you remain silent? This man, and the people who brought him to Jesus had a command not to tell what He had done for them, but you have a command to tell. Will everyone be disobedient and Jesus receive no praise; no honor, for all that He has done? I

hope that you will not be silent, but filled with the Holy Spirit to declare the things that He has done.