

# Mark 7:24-37

**Date: Sunday, 16 May 2021**

**Scripture: Mark 7:24-37**

**Sermon: Jesus and the World**

**Preacher: Justin Ang**

## Passage

Mark 7:24 And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. 25 But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 28 But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." 29 And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." 30 And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

Mark 7:31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 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. 33 And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. 34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

# Transcript

## Clubs

Back at first year university, I was so enthusiastic that I joined all these different clubs. The only one that I remember joining was the Tennis club, but I never really did anything with it to be honest with you. Clubs are great because people of different walks of life can join it if they have something in common. Tennis club, you enjoy playing tennis. The Squash club, you enjoy playing squash. There's a whole different range of things that you do, motor club, or the rotary club. PROBUS.

What about church?

I've been thinking about this question for a little while now, what is church? Why is it that we gather together, on Sundays and during the week? What is the purpose of us getting together? Are we a club? Let me ask, are there people that you know that you would say, I could never see that person come to church? I could never see that person become a Christian? No way! Is there someone in your life that you have been praying for, for their hearts to be turned, and yet they have refused to repent and trust in Jesus? That you have agonised over because you desire salvation for them and yet their hearts are hardened? Where you feel like you want to give up because you have not seen any change in their life?

Today, we're looking at this passage where Jesus speaks to a Gentile woman that wants her daughter to be healed and I hope that this passage will be a challenge to us here at church. To see Jesus' grace for each one of us, and the grace that is on offer to everyone, including those that you know that you could never see coming to church. I hope it's an encouragement to us this morning to see two things. The good news is for all people. Jesus opens ears and hearts.

## Jesus is for all people

Let's have a look. The first of these two points is the fact that the good news is for all people. Because one of the things that should strike us as we read through the gospel of Mark is the fact that we see glimpses of Jesus' ministry not just to the Israelites but also to the Gentiles. Gentiles are people who are not Jews and we

might not remember it today, but Jesus was a Jew. And his ministry was primarily to the Jews.

Maybe that might not feel significant today because I suspect that most, if not all of us here, are not Jewish but rather we are Gentile. But when we read the Scriptures, we need to have that lens on. Jesus went to the people of Israel. You don't see it in Mark so much, but in the gospel of Matthew we read this,

*And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." Matthew 15:21-23 (ESV)*

This is the same recount, where Jesus encounters the Gentile woman. But Jesus says something really striking doesn't he? What does he say next?

*He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly. Matthew 15:24-28 (ESV)*

Do you see how abrupt Jesus' response is at first? He says that he was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. We may balk at what Jesus says here but it's actually true. Jesus was only sent to Israel because he was there to help the Israelites understand. To call them to repentance. To call them to be what they were meant to be, a light to the nations. To be what called Abraham, their forefather, to be, a light to the nations.

It's kind of like how you might welcome your own family into your house before you invite your friends into the house for dinner. There's a priority isn't there? You might invite me, as your pastor to your house, but that's very different from having your children in your house, isn't it?

Abraham's children, the nation of Israel, were to be a blessing to all the families of the earth. And I want to draw your attention to that because what Jesus does here in Mark 7 is really striking. It's very different to what the Pharisees and the Scribes were doing. As we saw last week, the Pharisees and the Scribes were separating

themselves with their cleanliness. It's all about cleaning cups, bowls, and everything. But what does Jesus say? It's not about how clean your food or your cups are, it's about your heart. And we see that today, with this encounter with the Gentile woman. Jesus is breaking down the bonds between Jews and Gentiles. What we should see is that the gospel is for all people. That Jesus is for all people. That even though Jesus is first for the Jews, and he uses the analogy of the children and the dog, he still continues to show grace, mercy and love to the Gentiles. That's incredible news.

Maybe you're thinking, "Yes, Justin, of course! That's why I'm a believer." But let me lay down a challenge to you. If Jesus shows grace and mercy to both Jews and Gentiles, do we do the same? Or do we share partiality? I mean, do we show favouritism? Because this passage should be an encouragement to us that Jesus himself, the good news isn't just for the Jews, it's for all people.

Back at a previous church, I was one of the youth group leaders. And one of the challenges I found was the fact that there was a divide between the believers who had been Christian their whole entire lives and the Christians who had just become a Christian recently. Maybe you know what I'm talking about. But the Christians who had been believers their whole entire lives knew a lot of the bible stories. They knew about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob... they knew a lot of the Old Testament stories. Whereas the new believers at the youth group, they knew none of those stories. And we had to work very hard to help the older believers realise that there was no distinction between themselves and the young believers. It was hard I tell you because it was very tempting for the older believers to look down on the younger believers. It was very easy for them to not want to associate themselves with the younger believers.

If what Jesus responded to the woman was her faith, then we are all in the same boat. It's only by faith, and faith alone that we enter into the kingdom of God. How do we treat those who are different from us? Maybe they're richer than us, or poorer than us. Maybe they're different from us because they've come from a different country, they've had a completely different upbringing. Church is a place where people from all different backgrounds come together, we may have nothing in common except for the fact that we confess that Jesus is Lord. We may be completely different to the person that's sitting across from us, but that doesn't mean that we don't love them. It means that we need to go out of our way to show sacrificial love to people who are different to us.

Jesus is for all people.

## **Jesus opens ears and hearts**

"But Justin, I've been trying to share the gospel with my family, my friend for years and years, and they still don't believe." Maybe that's what you're thinking. Because yes Jesus is for all people. But why is it that not everyone believes?

And the second point that we should see is that Jesus opens ears and hearts. Let's have a look at the second half of the passage today.

*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. And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Mark 7:32-35 (ESV)*

I've been wondering why this passage is here in Scripture. One of the reasons is to illustrate that Jesus is able to heal the Israelites, his own people, but he also heals those who are not Jewish. He heals the Gentiles. Because where is he when he heals the man? He's still in Gentile country, he's near the Decapolis. He's where the Gentiles are, he's where retired Romans soldiers are. And yet, here is a man who gets his ears open. He's able to speak. And it's so important for us to see Jesus' power as we read through Mark. It's important for us to see that Jesus has the power not only over the winds, the waves, the storms, demons, illnesses, but it's important for us to see his power for both the Israelites and Gentiles.

And this story of the deaf man here is a story to encourage us. It is to encourage and remind us that it is Jesus who opens people's hearts and their ears. Not just Israelites, but also Gentiles. And that's incredible. In fact we're told that "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak." (Mark 7:37, ESV) What Jesus does is astonishing, it's incredible. It should strike us in the heart, that where we may not be able to convince others for their need for Christ, we aren't able to soften people's hearts. It is Christ who does that. Do you have people in your life, loved ones, who you are hoping and praying that they will become Christian? Then we need to remember that it is Christ and Christ alone that makes hearts soft. It is Christ and Christ alone who is able cause the blind to see God's glory. It is

Christ and Christ alone who is able to open deaf ears so that they can hear the glorious news of salvation. Just as the prophet Ezekiel wrote,

*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. Ezekiel 36:26-27 (ESV)*

If God doesn't change people's hearts, then we're not going to see people change. And it's a lesson for us that we need to keep asking Jesus to do what only he can do. Maybe you are timid. You don't feel worthy to ask. But the story of the Gentile woman in this passage should encourage you. See what she does! She's so utterly bold, she asks with such faith even though she knows she's not an Israelite. And Jesus sees her faith and responds. I'm not saying that you are to name it and claim it, but I wonder whether when Jesus returns to earth, whether he will see faith? Will he see Christians who are on their knees, praying, pleading, just as the Gentile woman? I wonder whether when Jesus returns will he see Christians who are praying and not losing heart? (Luke 18:1-8) I wonder whether he will come back and see us seeking to save the lost of the Shire? I wonder whether when he comes back he will see us, Caringbah Presbyterian, seeking to save everyone, everyone of different backgrounds.

## **Closing**

I've been reading through Acts slowly recently, and one of the things that has struck me is the fact that the risen Lord Jesus seeks out the lost from all nations. In Acts 1, the disciples are told the following by Jesus.

*He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:7-8 (ESV)*

You know, we must really see that Jesus' compassion and his heart is for all people. He desires all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. May that be us too, considering that his heart was also for you and me. And when John the Apostle has a vision on the island of Patmos. He sees what it will be when Christ returns, he writes,

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."* Revelation 7:9-12 (ESV)

Imagine, that there will be a multitude from every nation, every tribe, every people, every language. Just worshipping the LORD. What a day that we can look forward to. May we seek to share the good news with all that we know. And pray that Christ would open their ears, their eyes and their hearts. Let's pray.