

**Introduction**

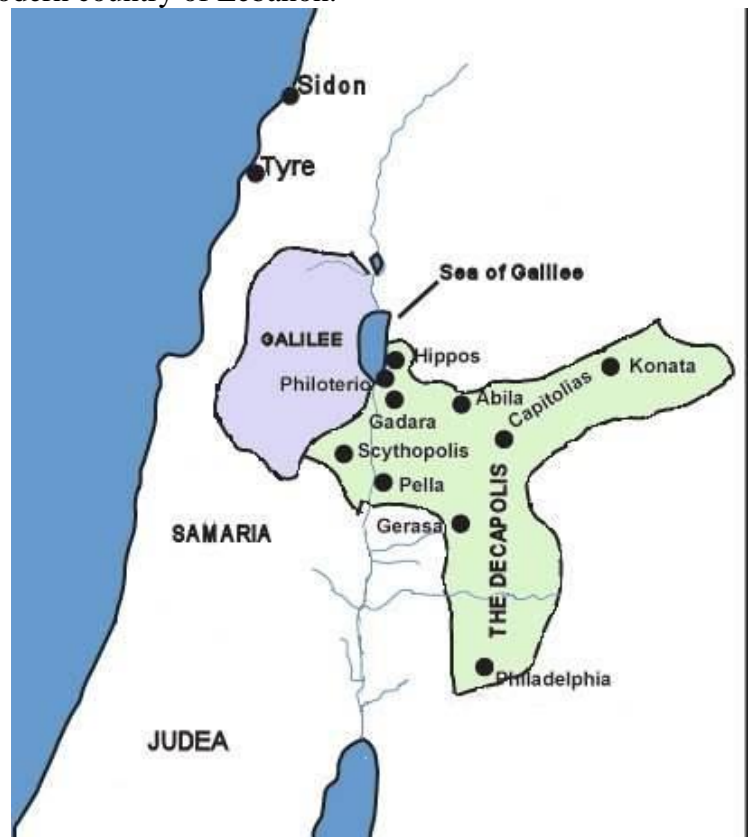
1. As I begin to experience more of the effects of aging, I notice that my hearing is sometimes not as good as I would like for it to be.
  - a. I don't mean the "selective hearing" that we all have sometimes, I'm talking about what I truly hear or sometimes don't hear clearly.
  - b. Hearing, as one of our five senses, is a precious gift that we must protect and preserve.
  - c. I can't imagine what it would be like to be completely deaf. What an obstacle to the normal tasks of living life that would be.
2. In today's passage, Jesus encountered a deaf-mute man who was brought to Him for healing by the man's friends who believed in Jesus' power for good.
3. **Read Mk 7:31-37.**

**A. Jesus Encounters a Deaf Mute (31-32)**

1. Jesus continued His journey north from the region of Tyre into the region of Sidon. (31a)
  - a. Tyre and Sidon are both cities located in the modern country of Lebanon.
  - b. These two cities with their surrounding areas are in close proximity and are often mentioned together in scripture.

2. Jesus turned southeast from Sidon and went down to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee into the region know as the Decapolis, which literally means "ten cities." (31b)

- a. Warren Wiersbe notes, "This miracle is recorded only by Mark and would be especially appreciated by his Roman readers, since the 'ten cities' region was like a 'Rome away from Rome'" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 94).
- b. The ten cities of the Decapolis lay mostly on the eastern plateau of the Jordan Valley.
- c. Their ruins today are primarily located in the country of Jordan. See the map to the right for the locations and names of the ten cities.
- d. In Jesus' day, these cities were Hellenized but populated by both Jews and Gentiles.
- e. William Lane comments, "The location of the episode in the Decapolis, however, proves nothing as to the participants since there were sizeable colonies of Jews in nearly all of the cities. It is difficult from the text to determine whether the crowd which approached Jesus was Jewish or Gentile in complexion" (William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 266).



3. In the region of the Decapolis, Jesus encountered a man who was "deaf and could hardly talk." (32)
  - a. Jesus' reputation again preceded him as "some people brought" the deaf mute to Jesus for healing.
  - b. We have seen this pattern before in Mk 2:1-12 as friends of a paralytic brought him to Jesus for healing and, in last week's passage, even a Gentile woman came to Jesus for healing of her demon possessed little daughter.
  - c. The fact that the deaf man "could hardly talk" (Gk., *mogilalon*) indicates that he may have lost his hearing due to an accident or disease and the loss of hearing had made his speech unintelligible.
  - d. Although the deaf man could not speak clearly for himself, his friends begged Jesus to "place a hand on him" which they believed would result in the man's being healed or at least blessed. (32)

- e. The word “begged” (Gk., *parakalousin*) in Greek is the same word used to describe God’s Holy Spirit as our Advocate. These friends were advocates who came alongside their friend in need and brought him to Jesus with whom they interceded on the man’s behalf.
- f. The friends may have been Gentiles, like the Syrophoenician woman in the previous passage. Whether Gentiles or Jews, they exhibited faith in Jesus and His healing power greater than that of the Jewish Pharisees and scribes back in Galilee.

## B. Jesus Heals the Deaf Mute (33-35)

1. Note how Jesus took the man aside from “the crowd” for special attention. (33)
  - a. Remember how Jesus had gone in with only the parents and a few disciples to heal Jairus’ daughter in private in her bedroom (cf., Mk 5:40-42).
  - b. Sometimes Jesus’ miracles of healing were done in public and sometimes in private.
  - c. We are not sure how many persons were witnesses as He performed this miracle, but Jesus was sought the best interests of the man and not a public spectacle that would glorify Himself.
2. There is power in both the touch and words of Jesus.
  - a. Jesus took physical action to heal the man as He put “his fingers into the man’s ears” and “spit and touched his tongue” (33).
    - 1) The physical actions may have been more for the man’s friends to see since they had asked Jesus to “place a hand on him” (32).
    - 2) Perhaps it was the way Jesus communicated His intentions of healing to the deaf-mute man who could not hear or speak but who could see and feel the touch of the Master’s hands.
    - 3) Sinclair Ferguson comments, “. . . Jesus ‘spoke’ to him in the language he could understand—sign-language. The fingers placed in his ears and then removed meant, ‘I am going to remove the blockage in your hearing.’ The spitting and the touching of the man’s tongue meant, ‘I am going to remove the blockage in your mouth.’ The glance up to heaven meant, ‘It is God alone who is able to do this for you.’ Jesus wanted the man to understand that it was not magic but God’s grace that healed him” (Ferguson, *Mark*, 116).
    - 4) We know that Jesus could heal without touch and even from a distance as He did with the Syrophoenician woman’s daughter last week.
    - 5) Physical touch is often an important part of the healing process even with physicians today.
  - b. Jesus “looked up (Gk., *anablepsis*) to heaven . . . with a deep sigh (Gk., *estenaksen*)” (34)
    - 1) Jesus was looked up to His Father in heaven for power to heal the man.
    - 2) Remember how Jesus went apart to lonely places to pray and renew His strength by spending time alone in prayer and communion with His Father (cf., Mk 1:35; 6:31).
    - 3) Wiersbe comments, “The ‘sigh’ was an inward groan, our Lord’s compassionate response to the pain and sorrow sin has brought into the world. It was also a prayer to the Father on behalf of the handicapped man. (The same word is used in connection with prayer in Rom. 8:23, and the noun in Rom. 8:26.)” (Wiersbe, 94).
    - 4) Jesus trusted in the power and resources of God to enable Him to do His will.
  - c. Jesus spoke one word in Aramaic “*Ephphatha*” which Mark translated into Greek as “Be opened” (Gk., *dianoichtheti*).
    - 1) It is interesting that Jesus spoke in Aramaic in a Gentile, Greek-speaking region. However, His audience may have been Jewish or included some Jews.
    - 2) This is most likely an accurate, eye-witness account of the man’s healing due to the use of this specific Aramaic word as the one which Jesus spoke.
    - 3) Remember that the Aramaic words of healing (i.e., “*Talitha koum* meaning ‘Little girl, I say to you, get up!’”) Jesus used in healing Jairus’ daughter were also recorded in Mk 5:41.
    - 4) Of course, there is nothing magical about this word or even the physical actions of Jesus. The power of healing came down from Jesus’ heavenly Father as He trusted Him for what was needed in His ministry.
3. “At this the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.” (35)
  - a. Like Jairus’ daughter in Mk 5:42, the deaf-mute man was immediately healed when Jesus spoke.
  - b. We can only imagine the words of joy and thanksgiving that most have flowed from the man’s loosened tongue and the joyful response of the friends who had brought him to Jesus.

### C. The News about Jesus Spreads (36-37)

1. As we have seen in the past, “Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone” (36a).
  - a. Jesus had done the same thing after the healing of Jairus’ daughter (cf., Mk 5:43) and other occasions (cf., Mk 1:34,44; 3:12).
  - b. He did not command the silence of the Gerasene demoniac, who was most likely from the City of Gedara, one of the ten cities (cf., Mk 5:19-20).
  - c. It is not clear why Jesus wanted the witnesses to keep quiet about His miraculous power.
    - 1) Perhaps by this time word was going back into Judea even from predominantly Gentile areas about this miraculous healer from God.
    - 2) Perhaps He did not want to attract large crowds in this Gentile region as had happened back in Galilee (cf., Mk 2:1-2; 3:7-9; 6:54-56).
    - 3) Jesus still had work to do before openly revealing and acknowledging His identity to the Jewish leaders at the end of His earthly life (cf., Mk 14:60-65).
    - 4) However, the time for the revelation of His identity was drawing near (cf., Mk 11:1ff).
2. Jesus’ repeated commands for silence about Himself only resulted in more talk about what He had done and speculation about who He might be. (36b)
3. “People were overwhelmed with amazement” (NIV) or “beyond measure astonished” (KJV) (37).
  - a. The word translated as “amazed” or “astonished” (Gk., *exeplessonto*) has been used to describe the response of the Jews to Jesus’ teaching in Mk 1:22 and Mk 6:2. Here the word describes the response of even Gentiles to Jesus’ miracle-working power.
  - b. The word translated as “overwhelmed” or “beyond measure” (Gk., *hyperperissos*) is used only here in all of the New Testament. What the people witnessed was beyond anything that they had ever experienced or even expected to experience.
  - c. Those who could speak were at first struck dumb by the overwhelming power Jesus demonstrated in healing the deaf-mute man, but then their tongues were loosened to tell others about their amazing experience.
  - d. The “kept talking about it” (Gk., *ekerusson*) uses the same Greek word associated with preaching the gospel. They were preaching/telling others about Jesus—what He said and what He did.
  - e. Surely the things that Jesus both said and did were amazing and overwhelmed those who heard and witnessed them.
4. They proclaimed “He has done everything well” (37).
  - a. James Brooks comments that this verse “. . . recalls Gen 1:31, and ‘He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak’ recalls Isa 35:5-6. Isaiah 35 describes the messianic age poetically. Mark’s allusion to the passage implies that the age had drawn near in the ministry of Jesus” (James Brooks, *Mark*, 123).
  - b. Both Jews and Gentiles acknowledged that Jesus was a good and powerful person in both His words and His actions.
  - c. They saw His healing of the deaf-mute man not as a miracle worked by Satan, as the Pharisees had proposed regarding some of His other miracles (cf., Mk 3:22), but as a good gift from God, which it certainly was.
  - d. Again, the faith of these Gentiles exceeded that of Jesus’ fellow Jews, amazingly, even that of the Jewish priests and teachers of the Law.

### D. Reflections

1. For whom do you need to be an advocate before the Lord? What healing does your friend need—spiritual, emotional, mental, physical? How will you bring them to Jesus for healing? Will you pray for your friend? Will you go to your friend in need with the help that Jesus enables you to share through His word and through your loving, self-sacrificial service?
2. Jesus knows our needs and focuses His attention on us individually as we come to Him for care and healing.
3. Are you looking up to your heavenly Father for the resources that you need in ministry or are you trusting in your own power and resources as you work in the kingdom? Ultimately, all that we are, have, and do in ministry comes from the Father. We must trust God to supply what we need as we take physical and verbal action in sharing the good news of Jesus and His love with our world.

4. When was the last time you were amazed and overwhelmed by the things that Jesus said and did? Do you need a fresh encounter with both the written word (i.e., the Bible) and the Living Word (i.e., Jesus), who still speaks amazing and overwhelming things into your life today?
5. What amazing things has Jesus done in your life that you are anxious to tell others? You may not have been healed of deafness, but Jesus still does amazing acts of spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental healing in people's lives today. Be ready and anxious to tell others the good news of what Jesus has done in and through your life.