

## Mark 7:31-7: healing of a man who was deaf & dumb

John Nordin, for text study, August 28, 1991; revised 1994

### Context

- 7:1-23            Questioning of traditions; what defiles a person?  
7:24             Journey from Galilee, north to region of Tyre and Sidon  
7:25-30         The Phoenician woman from Syria

### Issues

- Is Jesus alone (without the disciples)?
- Is there any theological significance to change of location from Jewish territory to a mixed Jewish-Gentile area?

### Detailed examination

Note similarities to story in 5:40-3

- 31**     It isn't easy to sort out the geography of this trip.
- 32**     "they brought to him" -- the crowd, not the disciples  
"lay hands on" -- both a physical and metaphorical meaning
- 33**     Unlike most healings, here we see Jesus doing specific actions, not just declaring the healing. Does this change our view of the healing?
- 34**     "he sighed" -- a groan, deep emotion, a Romans 8:26 sort of sigh.
- 35**     "opened", "released" -- implying that he was bound, as by a demon? What is Mark's view of illness and the significance of fight against illness? Would we call cancer, AIDS, Alzheimers, etc. demonic? How about illnesses that are seen to be reflections of family heritage, systems?
- 36**     "proclaimed it." Proclaimed what, exactly: Jesus as miracle worker or Jesus as Christ? Should we proclaim the healing, or Jesus as revealed in the healing? Is the latter a way of dodging the question of miracles?
- 37**     "done all things well," probably a reference to certain Old Testament passages.

## **Preaching the text**

Do we believe this miracle? The text has no theologizing for us to escape dealing with the bare miracle.

Ways to avoid the text:

1. Spiritualize it: "deafness of racism." The intimacy of spitting, etc.  
But the text is not a metaphor, it's an account presented as history.

2. The text may be also avoided by what seems to be simple acceptance of it: by a "generic preaching," that, for example, just tells "the story." However, this is also a problem because our ordinary lives do not include the sort of activity that is in this text. We do have questions. Just preaching "the story" avoids the questions, and the wonder. Consider verse 36: really believing the miracle would make a difference in your life. Consider James 1:22: "be doers of the word and not hearers only..."

So what is the point of the story? Is it a testimony to Jesus, an example of how Jesus' true nature was slowly revealed?