

Sermon ✝ September 5, 2021

Mark 7:24-37

Frank Maxwell

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to be deaf and mute? And whenever you see a person with a severe handicap, do you ever think to yourself . . . what it would be like if you were that person.

What would it be like to be totally deaf and then what would it be like to not be able to communicate with others? It is quite natural for us to imagine what it would be like to be handicapped in some way. But what most of us never imagine, I am sure, is what it would be like to have a severe handicap . . . and then somehow to be cured of our malady.

Think about how it must have been for the deaf/mute man in the miracle story that was just read? He had spent his whole life learning how to live with his situation. He had spent a lifetime building relationships without the ability to speak or hear. People knew how to relate to him and he knew how to relate to them. He had learned how to make a living. Everything he had ever done in life had been done as a deaf/mute.

And then, Jesus gives him the ability to hear and speak. At first, there must have been incredible excitement. Now he was like everybody else.

That's maybe when the panic sets in. Will the relationships he so values now change because he has changed? How can he make a living now that he has new skills? Would he have to learn to live life all over again because nothing would be the same?

Inside of the man, things would be different as well. He would now hear sounds; he would hear words spoken to his face and whispers behind his back. He would have to learn how to express himself in a totally different way.

There would be feelings of great joy and feelings of frustration. But that's how it is . . . to be touched by God. It is both exciting and frightening.

So it is that Mark presents us with a story of Jesus curing a man's deafness and speech impediment because he wants the world to hear and speak the message of God's love.

This was a miracle. A miracle which Jesus could perform because of his unique relationship with God. Many experts have attempted to *explain* this event using modern psychology. We shouldn't always be so concerned about *proving* the miracles of Jesus. Rather allow your mind to play imaginatively over it.

For miracles suggest a transformation which come to a life when God enters in. And as far as miracle stories go . . . this one is certainly more graphic than most.

I'm mean Jesus gets into the nitty gritty here. No job was too low for him. It's like an architect mopping the floor of some great building that he designed. This was more than a cure for one individual . . . once again a Jesus was clearly demonstrating the power and the love of God.

Jesus came to heal souls, spirits & minds. It's about communication in the broadest sense. He came to heal our corporate deafness.

This miracle is about the larger ministry of making the mind and heart more sensitive to the voices of God and the world. We are often deafened by our self-concern and self-esteem, by our pride and laziness, by our sin. We are all prone to cultivate a deafness of convenience.

It is convenient not to be able to hear the cries of suffering from the other side of the world, cries of need and pain in our own community, cries of loneliness in our own neighborhood. And, of course, if we cannot hear those cries, we cannot be expected to do anything about them.

Even those who profess to have working ears cannot always hear. They are deaf to the sad music of humanity and to the still, small voice of God. Too deaf to hear sobs of grief from all who suffer from any loss. Too hard of hearing to detect the rumble of the discontent over the injustices of the world. They turn their heads so they are unable to hear the wailing of the hungry of the world who can no longer stand the pangs of hunger. Ultimately, we only hear what we want to hear.

Jesus cures our speech impediments. We are a talkative people, sounding off and complaining at the slightest inconvenience. However, we often become tongue-tied when it comes to speaking words of compassion, words of truth and justice, or being a witness to our faith. Sadly, too often the church has little to say of profound significance because many of Christ's disciples have speech impediments.

God's word does not sound clearly through us. We have become God's mutes. We don't wish to speak too loudly for fear of embarrassment. George Bernard Shaw once wrote, *"The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them."* Likewise, *"If Jesus Christ were to come to earth today people would not kill him. They would invite him over to dinner, listen to what he had to say, and then laugh at him."*

The great modern sin is apathy; it is indifference; it is ignoring the needs of others. But we can do something about it.

We can open our ears and mouths. We can stand up for that in which we believe. We can teach our children the importance of being aware, of speaking out, and of relying on their God. We can follow the example of Jesus by encouraging open and honest communication.

Our Lord hears the cries of the people.  
Our Lord ministers to our pain and sorrow.

Our Lord hears the cries of the people.  
Our Lord touches our hearts with love.

Our Lord hears the cries of the people.  
Our Lord offers us the gift of new hope.

Our Lord hears the cries of the people.  
Our Lord has redeemed us from sin and death.

Our Lord hears the cries of the people.  
Blessed be the name of the Lord forever.