

July 9, 2017

Mark 7:31-37

On the Mend: Healing What Ails Us “Healing Inhibitions”

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Jesus has gone to the eastern most frontier of Rome – the Decapolis – the ten cities, made up of mostly Gentiles. It was the northern most Jesus ever went. He went not for R and R, but rather so he might do some intensives with his disciples without interruptions. And so it went, and as our reading begins, they were on their way back to Galilee, when they had presented to them a man for healing, who was both deaf and mute.

Before, we jump right in; we would do well not to forget that the purpose for which the Gospel of Mark was written was to show us that Jesus was indeed the “Son of God”. Mark gives us the details, so we too will come to the conclusion that Jesus was not just one among many others. He was the One of which the prophets spoke, and thus the audience was to remember Isaiah 35:6, ... “the ears of the deaf will be opened” ... “and the tongue of the speechless will sing” ...

Whenever Jesus healed, he was doing so to give knowledge and teach about forgiveness. There was a message in the healing, apart from just the fact that the person was healed.

With that foremost in our minds, let’s get into knowledge that is available to us through the recounting of the healing of the man who was deaf and mute.

Let’s begin where the story begins, Jesus pulls the man aside. We know from other healing stories that Jesus was inundated with people who were desperate to be healed. There was

always a crowd, pressing in, making demands, everyone pulling at him for his attention. Yet, Jesus focuses on this man and this man alone, his pattern, rather than an exception.

I don't know about you, but every once in awhile I catch myself feeling something like this, "God's way too busy for my "little stuff". God has way bigger fish to fry. Yet, this story reminds us, Jesus called on God, amidst the craziness, busyness, and many other people, places and things, which were vying for his attention. **Let us never become confused with the misinformation that God is too busy for us, and that what we are going through matters little to God.** We see in the story of Jesus not only the ability of God to become laser focused and responsive, but also for there to be deep feelings for us, regarding our predicaments.

Did you catch that part of the scripture that read, "Jesus sighed"? That was about the Divine feeling our pain, acknowledging our situation, and wanting to do something in response to it. God does not have neuropathy. Jesus the Son of God notices, feels, and responds. Jesus the Son of Man notices, feels, and responds. **With all he is the God-Man Jesus, notices, feels, and responds.**

In hopes of not getting lost in all the details, let me get right to the main point. This man, whether deaf since birth or not, in that day and time was currently completely cut off from the world. No sign language, nor text at the bottom of the TV screen. It was catch, as catch can, which meant so much was lost on him.

Let us not fail to note, Jesus always brings people back into community whenever he heals. When we say, "As an inclusive community of love and support, St. James United Church of

Christ is a spiritual home for all people, to grow in faith, and come together in service.” we are giving the healing touch we received from him to others who need a healing touch. When we say, and live this we are being healers in Jesus name.

Jesus did this healing of the deaf and mute man, up close and personal. He got close enough to feel his fear, experience his hurts, and know what caused him to sweat. There are **things that can only be accomplished in close proximity**. There are healings that can only occur when we rub elbows, give each other high-fives, hold hands in prayer, and stand side by side in compassion with respect.

I had someone stop by my house the other day, to tell me she was pushed to retire at age 67, and that it was sudden and unexpected, and thus she was forced into retirement before she had made plans. She commented how hard the last six months have been trying to find her way. She thought our church might be an answer for her. Thus, she will helping us out twice this week, and we will help her with a little healing work of our own. Our time together will be a healing time, for all of us.

Unable to hear, that was the first of his problems. The answer, be opened. Unable to speak, that was the second of his problems. The answer, be opened. Being open is the answer to both of his problems. It was about rising up, not shutting down. It was about opening out, not being closed off. It was about getting out there, and not being holed up.

Isolation and estrangement makes us sick, inclusion and integration can bring healing. So, because of that, we need to pay attention to the story and see ourselves as Jesus, as well as the deaf and mute man.

As Jesus, we must offer healing when healing is needed. As the deaf and mute man, we need to see our real situation for what it is and be open to being opened. In other words, to receive the healing we really need.

I don't need to spend any large amount of time on how busyness, distractions, and our always too much to do lists distract us from getting the healing we need, and thus continue to keep us isolated and quarantined off. Instead, let's just say I gave you a reminder.

Yet, I do want us to consider that being isolated (which sometimes comes from previous hurt or fear) is what causes us to be in the state we are in. And in that case, the remedy is traveling, getting out and about! Sometimes we remain isolated because we don't get out in the crowd. But rather, stay where we are comfortable, what is familiar, what we know. Yet, knowing more is often what brings healing. Facing his fear of the crowd, with all those mouths moving in ways he did not understand, had to be noticed, recognized, and responded to, if he was to be healed. Mark Twain was right when he said, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness." Jesus healed the deaf man so that which had been incomprehensible before could now be comprehended.

The man was not only deaf; he was mute – unable to speak. I don't know about you, but at times I cannot speak what needs to be said. Sometimes we don't speak up because we don't really know how much we feel what we feel. In other words, we ignore our hurt and our anger. If we are not attentive we can **ignore and deny our feelings, and in doing so, fail to speak** about that which is percolating or maybe even boiling within us. The answer to that dilemma is to "listen in". Which

means, taking the time and having the courage to hear what is really going on within you.

Next, after having listened to yourself, there comes the task of speak up. Now, I chide myself for not speaking up when I should – because I should more often than I do. Yet, it takes me a bit of time to both process and clarify what went on, and then if I am honest it take me a bit more time to work up the mustering of courage to speak up and speak out.

Consequently, I am known to let myself off the hook regarding my muteness, by saying the time has passed. Yet, if it is still with me, the time has not passed.

Holding things in, and not being able to express yourself is numbing at best, and self-destructive at worst.

Do we ever dare to think that we must speak up, because if we don't, that which is wrong will remain, that which is askew will continue, which is destructive will never be healed? To speak up is to live into our responsibility of making this world a better place, by not allowing that which is destroying humanity and the created order to go unaddressed, and thus continue.

Let me end, with the words of one who can say it better than I, Audre Lorde , “A Litany of Survival” from her book, The Black Unicorn: Poems

“For those of us who live at the shoreline
standing upon the constant edges of decision
crucial and alone
for those of us who cannot indulge
the passing dreams of choice
who love in doorways coming and going
in the hours between dawns
looking inward and outward

at once before and after
seeking a now that can breed
futures
like bread in our children's mouths
so their dreams will not reflect
the death of ours:

For those of us
who were imprinted with fear
like a faint line in the center of our foreheads
learning to be afraid with our mother's milk
for by this weapon
this illusion of some safety to be found
the heavy-footed hoped to silence us
For all of us
this instant and this triumph
We were never meant to survive.

And when the sun rises we are afraid
it might not remain
when the sun sets we are afraid
it might not rise in the morning
when our stomachs are full we are afraid
of indigestion
when our stomachs are empty we are afraid
we may never eat again
when we are loved we are afraid
love will vanish
when we are alone we are afraid
love will never return
and when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard
nor welcomed
but when we are silent

we are still afraid

So it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive.”

And Jesus said, “Be opened!”