

BIBLE STORY: JESUS HEALS THE DEAF MUTE

Mark 7:31-37

Central Thoughts

- We have no ability of our own to hear, receive, and believe God's Word.
- God's Word alone creates the miracle of faith in Christ.
- God works through the physical means of water and the Word to bring about the new birth.
- Where there is faith in Christ for salvation there will be the confession of faith in Him.

Discussion Questions

Where had Jesus been before He healed the deaf mute at the Sea of Galilee?

The region of Tyre and Sidon, and through the region of the Decapolis

Where are these regions?

Tyre and Sidon are in Phoenicia, northwest of the Sea of Galilee. The Decapolis is the region of ten cities to the northeast, east, and southeast of the Sea of Galilee.

Were the populations of these regions predominantly Jewish or Gentile?

Gentile

What did Jesus do wherever He travelled?

He healed the sick and preached the Gospel of the kingdom.

Who brought the deaf mute to Jesus?

Those who had heard Jesus preach and witnessed His miracles

What did they beg Jesus to do?

Put his hand on the deaf mute.

What did Jesus do to the man?

He took the man aside from the multitude, put His fingers in his ears, and spat and touched the man's tongue with His spittle. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to the deaf man, "Ephphatha," which means, "Be opened" and immediately the man could hear, and he could speak plainly.

Even though the man could not hear Jesus' Word, what did the Word of Jesus do?

It opened the man's ears and loosed his tongue to speak plainly

What does the physical infirmity of being deaf illustrate about the spiritual condition of everyone since the fall into sin?

We have no ability of our own to believe and trust in God.

What does Jesus' miracle of healing the deaf mute illustrate about the power of God's Word?

God's Word has the power to call unbelievers to faith.

Where is this teaching highlighted in the Catechism?

The explanation to the Third Article of the Creed: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."

Who are the Scriptures referring to in references about "the finger of God" writing upon the Tablets of Stone (Exodus 31:18) or casting out demons (Luke 11:20)?

The Holy Spirit

What is the Holy Spirit the author of?

The Holy Spirit is the author of the Holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).

Upon what does Jesus' spit?

Upon His fingers

What is spittle made of?

Water

What does Jesus' touch with His fingers and His spittle?

The man's ears and the man's tongue

What does He illustrate by these gestures?

The Holy Spirit and the Word of God are inseparably joined together as the power of God to effect faith. In this miracle, water and the Word are joined together by Jesus' spittle and the Word that He speaks, "Ephphatha!"

How is being "born from above" or "born from heaven" referred to by Jesus with Nicodemus in John 3:5?

"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

How does Jesus acknowledge God the Father in this miracle?

He looks up to heaven.

With what other gesture does Jesus refer to the Holy Spirit?

He sighs

Notice the allusions to the Holy Trinity in this passage: In looking up into heaven, God the Father is acknowledged as the One who has sent His only begotten Son and as the giver of the Holy Spirit as Jesus' sighs and speaks the life-giving Word, "Ephphatha!"

What is the Sacrament of the Holy Trinity where, by water and the Word, the Holy Spirit calls us to faith and gives us the new birth?

Holy Baptism

What does this miracle teach us about the Word of God?

It has the power to create the miracle of faith.

What does this man's speaking illustrate about the miracle of faith?

Where there is faith in Christ, there will be the confession of faith

Why could the people not stop speaking about Jesus?

They too believed in Him and therefore they proclaimed widely the things Jesus had done

What did they confess about Jesus?

"He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

Meditation on the Bible Story

The miracle of the healing of the deaf mute teaches us that the Word of God alone has the power to bring us to faith in Christ. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). By the Word of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit calls us to faith as the Third Article of the Creed teaches. In Jesus' miracle we see His love and compassion for the man as He takes him aside from the multitude, puts His fingers in his ears, touches his tongue with His spittle, and speaks the life-giving Word, "Be opened!" The Word of Christ gives what it says! It has the power to create faith where there is no faith and to call into existence out of nothing. Just as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were present at creation in the creation of life, so the Holy Trinity is present in the Word of God to give new life through the preaching and teaching of God's Word and in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. The Word of God enters the ear, implants in the heart, creates faith, and out of the mouth the confession of faith is made. "The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart that is, the word of faith which we preach: that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation...So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:8-10, 17).

Prayer on the Bible Story

O Lord, by Your Word and Spirit, open our ears to hear, our hearts to believe, and our mouths to confess Your holy name, for You alone are the Savior and Lord, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



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