



A Cry Without a Voice

By David Wilkerson
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In Mark 7, we find Jesus performing a great miracle. The whole dramatic scene takes place in just five verses:

"Departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain" (Mark 7:31-35).

Picture the scene. As Jesus arrived on the shores of Decapolis, he encountered a man who was both deaf and tongue-tied. The man could talk, but his speech was unintelligible. Christ took the man aside, away from the crowd. And as he stood before this man, he placed his fingers in his own ears. Then Jesus spat, and touched his own tongue. He spoke two words: "Be opened." And instantly, the man could hear and speak clearly.

Just prior to this scene, Jesus had also delivered a woman's demon-possessed daughter. By merely speaking a word, he cast the evil spirit out of the girl. I wonder: why are these two miracles recorded in Scripture? Are they included as just two more scenes from the Lord's life on earth?

The vast majority of Christians believe such stories are preserved in Scripture because they reveal much to us. They're intended to show God's power over Satan and sickness. They're meant as proof of Christ's deity, to establish he was God in flesh. And they're meant to encourage our faith, to show us our God can work miracles.

I believe these stories were recorded for all these reasons, and much more. Jesus tells us every word he spoke came from the Father. He said and did nothing on his own, but by his Father's leading. Moreover, every event of Christ's life holds a lesson for us, upon whom the ends of the world are come (see 1 Corinthians 10:11).

This miracle in Mark 7 isn't just about the healing of one man who lived centuries ago. Like every event recorded of Jesus' life, it has a special meaning for us today. And, like Christ's parable of the hidden treasure in the field, we're to dig out its meaning.

**I believe this miracle reveals
the unfathomable mercy and
compassion of Christ to this
present generation.**

For some time now, I've been perplexed by questions about the present generation of young people. These burning questions have

simply confounded me. Yet I believe this miracle story holds a revelation that answers many of those questions.

First, I want to ask who was this man brought to Jesus: "one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech" (Mark 7:32)? We're not given his name. However, I know who he represents to us today. He's an example of those who "have ears, but they hear not" (Psalm 115:6). Of course, this verse refers to a spiritual condition. It describes a state of spiritual deafness, an inability to hear and comprehend the truth of God.

I'm deeply impressed that this deaf, tongue-tied man is like the great majority of young people today. I believe this is especially true of children from Christian homes. Many just don't seem to have the capacity to hear and digest God's Word. I'm talking about good kids: respectful, obedient, not partyers. They're not caught up in drugs, alcohol, sex or immorality. But they're extremely passive about God. In all my years of ministry, I've never seen such non-involvement with the things of God as this present generation.

I've met many of these spiritually deaf youth, all over the world. And for years, I've questioned why so many good young people, especially those raised by loving Christian parents, could remain passive about Jesus. They hear convicting sermons, they've been taught a gospel of love, but still they're unresponsive.

I've been deeply hurt by this condition in some of my own grandchildren. They've heard my sermons, seen me preach with godly tears and Holy-Ghost authority. But they've shown no visible response. At times I've thought, "Maybe today is the day the Holy Spirit might melt that lukewarmness, that passivity. Perhaps I'll see a tear to show some evidence that God has touched this young heart."

I've wondered, "Are they stone deaf? Or have they rejected God? Have they closed their ears so they can't hear?" I wrestle with such thoughts, because I know these are good kids who have not rejected Jesus. But they simply don't have a passion. And Christ himself warns that good people end up in hell if they stay lukewarm (see Revelation 3:16).

I see the same condition in many Christian husbands. These are good men, faithful husbands, loving fathers, responsible providers. When they attend church with their wives, I know those women are praying: "Maybe today his heart will be touched." But afterward, the husband just smiles and says, "I enjoyed that today. I'll go with you again sometime." These men aren't Christ-rejecters. They're not wicked, sensual or immoral. But if they continue only to admire Christ, they're lost.

I have a number of friends who are like this as well. They love me dearly and would do anything for me. They come to Times Square Church on occasion and always complement my preaching. But God's Word never affects them. They can talk about Christ's death, burial and resurrection, because they've heard it preached over and over again. But they're passive. They leave God's presence just as they entered: unchanged.

I tell you, all such people have ears, yet they don't hear. They're spiritually deaf.

**There is only one hope on earth
for this man to hear and speak.**

The deaf, tongue-tied man's only hope was to get to Jesus. He had to have a personal encounter with him.

Let me note that this man wasn't like those Paul describes: "having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Nor did this man have "the spirit of slumber... ears that they should not hear" (Romans 11:8). He wasn't like those described in Acts 28:27: "Their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears." Nor was he like those present at Stephen's stoning, people who "stopped their ears" (Acts 7:57).

The fact is, this man wanted to hear. He wanted desperately to be healed. Yet, we read, "They bring unto him one that was deaf" (Mark 7:32). This man didn't get to Jesus on his own. He had to be brought to him. Clearly, he must have known who Jesus was, and that he had power to heal. Moreover, this man knew how to communicate, either through sign language or writing. And he could get around on his own. Yet he never made the effort to come to Jesus himself. "They" had to bring him.

Who were "they" in this verse? I can only speculate they were the man's family or loving friends, people who cared enough to bring him to Jesus. I believe this scene says so much about the situation with our young people today. They won't go to Jesus on their own. They have to be brought to him by their parents, their friends, their church family. Like the deaf man's parents, we also must bring our children and loved ones to Christ. How, you ask? Through daily, believing prayer.

Think about it. Suppose this deaf man's parents brought him to Jesus. They knew how much their son needed a personal encounter. After all, they couldn't beg their boy to hear. It would be foolish to plead with him or berate him. And it would be unkind to make him feel condemned because he couldn't voice the thoughts of his heart.

Yet many Christian parents, myself included, can be so unkind to their own children in these very ways. How? We get upset with them because they can't tell us why they won't come to Jesus. We can't comprehend why they're not able to put into words the cry of their heart. The truth is, they're spiritually tongue-tied.

I can't begin to fathom how the world has affected this present generation. Young people today have endured more than any previous generation. They've experienced the terror of 9/11. They've witnessed school shootings. They've endured sexual scandal in the White House. They've seen prominent evangelists exposed as wicked sinners. And now they're seeing CEOs caught cheating to satisfy greed-driven lusts. Is it any wonder our youth are confused over who and where God is in their lives?

Yet it doesn't matter how our children came to this condition. It's useless to try to figure out why they're so deaf to God's Word, so unable to express their heart's cry. After all, Scripture doesn't tell us how the deaf, tongue-tied man came to his condition. Not a word is mentioned about his being born that way. It simply doesn't matter. Likewise, it serves no purpose for Christian parents to try to figure out what they might have said or done wrong earlier in their child's life. There

should be no looking back, no second-guessing, no guilt trips.

The fact is, no parent or loved one can counsel a deaf child into hearing. You can't love a tongue-tied person into speaking plainly. It can never work. And there's no pastor, counselor or youth minister who can convince a child to hear truth. They can't be loved into it, condemned into it, or counseled into it. They're simply deaf.

There's only one cure, one hope, for our children and loved ones to hear truth. And that is a personal encounter with Jesus himself. "And they beseech him to put his hand upon him" (Mark 7:32). The Greek word for "beseech" here means to implore, to pray. These parents begged Christ, "Please, Lord, touch our son. Put your hand on him."

**What's the first thing
Jesus did when the man was
brought to him?**

"He took him aside from the multitude" (Mark 7:33). Christ knew immediately what this deaf man wanted. He longed for his own touch, his own experience. He couldn't settle for something "they" had found. It had to be real for him. He wanted Jesus to open his ears and set his tongue free. And it had to happen between the two of them.

You may say, "You don't understand. I saw my child give his heart to Christ years ago. He knelt before the Lord and prayed. After that, he backslid, but he came running back to Jesus, repenting. He's still good, moral and kind, but now he's grown lukewarm. He doesn't seem to care about the things of God. What happened? Why won't he yield himself completely? What's holding him back from fully committing?"

The answer is, he hasn't had his own encounter with Christ. He came to Jesus on Dad's experience, Mom's experience, a friend's experience. He surrendered according to someone else's pleading. Or, maybe he heard a preacher deliver such a hellfire message, he got scared and ran to Jesus.

There are any number of reasons why the experience didn't last for your child. My point is, he hasn't encountered Jesus for himself. He may know the truth, from observing Christ in others' lives. But he hasn't experienced Jesus as his own. He hasn't been taken aside from the multitude and given his own touch. The revelation must come alone with the Lord.

If you've served God over the years, let me ask you: isn't it true you can look back to a day or time when you had a supernatural encounter with Jesus? He touched you, and you knew it. You didn't get the experience from someone else. It wasn't instilled in you because you heard someone preach it. You experienced Christ for yourself. That's why you're confident in what you have with him.

Jesus knew the deaf man needed this kind of encounter. So he spoke to the man in his own language: sign language. "(He) put his fingers into his [own] ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue" (7:33). I picture Jesus placing his fingers in his own ears, pointing to the deaf man and mouthing, "I will open your ears." Then he stuck out his tongue, touched it, and spat (probably because a tongue-tied man can't spit). He indicated, "I'm going to cut the string holding your tongue. And you'll be like all other men."

Can you imagine what went through this deaf man's mind? He must have thought, "He's speaking my language. He's not asking me to

understand him. He wants me to know he understands me! And he's taken me aside so I won't be embarrassed. He knows how shy I am, and he doesn't want a public show.

"He's not questioning me or accusing me. He knows exactly what I've been going through. He knows I haven't rejected him. He knows I want to hear his voice and speak to him. He knows my heart wants to praise him. But I can't do any of these things unless I receive his miraculous touch. He must know I want this."

Our Savior shows the same kind of compassion to our unsaved loved ones. He won't make a spectacle out of anyone. Think of how patient and caring he was with Saul of Tarsus. This well-known man was destined to have a miraculous encounter with Jesus. And Christ could have come to him at any time. He could have struck Saul down while Stephen was being stoned, in front of the multitudes. He could have made an example of Saul's conversion. But he didn't.

Instead, Jesus waited until Saul was virtually alone in the desert, riding his horse, "apart from the multitude." It was there he came to Saul, touching him supernaturally. And for years Saul, renamed Paul, recounted the story of that day. Jesus gave him his own miraculous touch, opening his blind eyes.

You don't have to walk down a church aisle to have an encounter with Jesus. His best work is done in secret. That's why he tells us, "When you pray, go to a closet, a secret place, away from the crowd. Then seek me privately. I will reward you openly."

**Alone with this man, Jesus does
something most unusual.**

"Looking up to heaven, he sighed" (Mark 7:34). The word for sigh here signifies an audible groan. Evidently, Jesus grimaced and a groan came out of his heart. Of course, the man couldn't hear it, because he was deaf. But what's this groan about?

I've read many commentaries about this scene. Yet none bears witness to what I believe God's Spirit is telling me. I'm convinced Jesus was looking into heaven and communing with the Father. He was quietly weeping in his soul, over two things. First, he wept over something that only he could see in this man. And second, he wept over something he sees today, locked in the hearts of so many people, especially the young.

What did Jesus see, both then and now? What was he hearing, both in this deaf man's heart and in the hearts of multitudes today? HE WAS HEARING A CRY WITHOUT A VOICE. It was a cry of the heart, bottled up, unable to be expressed. Now Christ himself groaned with a cry that couldn't be uttered. He was giving voice to the cries of all who can't.

Think of the many nights this deaf man cried himself to sleep because nobody understood him. Not even his mother or father could tell what he spoke. How often he tried to explain how he felt, but all that came out were painful, awkward sounds. He must have thought, "If only I could speak, just once. If only my tongue were loosed for a minute. I could tell someone what's going on in my soul. I would scream, 'I'm no dummy. I'm not under a curse. And I'm not running from God. I'm just confused. I've got problems, but nobody can hear them.'"

Yet Jesus heard the thoughts of this frustrated man's heart. He

understands every inward groan that can't be uttered. The Bible says our Lord is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. And he felt the pain of this man's deafness and tongue-tied condition.

I believe Christ was expressing the Father's pain over every inaudible cry of the heart. He was God in flesh, groaning over every heart-cry that can't be voiced: "What's wrong with me? I'm not mad at God. And I know Jesus is real. I love him and want to serve him. But I'm confused. Why can't I speak what's pent up in my heart?"

I have eleven grandchildren, and I pray daily for each of them. Right now, I'm praying diligently for particular ones, bringing them to Jesus through intercessory prayer. These are good, obedient kids, with loving parents. They all confess Christ, and they have tender hearts. Yet I see a passivity in them.

Lately, I've been making time to talk to each of them alone. I tell them, "You know I pray for you. You know your parents pray for you, too. We know how much you love the Lord, deep in your heart. But why are you so passive? I never hear you talk about the things of God. I don't know if you read your Bible or pray. Please, tell me what's going on in your heart. Is something bothering you?"

At first, they shrug. Then they tell me, "I don't know, Grandpa. I'm not mad at God. I just get confused. I don't think I can explain it." I go away dumbfounded. I have to ask God, "What's going on? I hear a cry, a jumbled sound, a yearning. But they can't voice it to me. They seem to want to tell me something, but they can't."

I'm convinced multitudes of other young people are in the same condition. If they could explain their cry, it would sound something like this: "I've seen so much hypocrisy in the church. Now I see it in the business world, in schools, everywhere. I've got girl-friend problems, problems with my friends. Everything is piling up on me. But I can't talk to anybody. My parents are open, but I can't seem to get it out."

We don't hear this cry. No human being can. Nor can we expect to understand it. So, what are we to do? We know heart-to-heart talks don't heal deaf ears. I believe we have but one option:

**We're to bring our loved
ones to Jesus, on our knees.**

We have to ask Christ to give them their own experience. We have to bring them to Jesus, just as the deaf man's parents did, to receive their own touch: "They beseech him to put his hand upon him" (Mark 7:32). We're to pray, "Lord, get them alone. Send your Holy Ghost to stir and woo their hearts. Reveal yourself to them. Give them their own experience."

Not long ago, a young man came forward during a prayer service. He was shaken and crying. He told me he was from Washington state, and that earlier that night he'd walked into our service accidentally. He'd left and gone to a concert, but he'd walked out of that event. Now he'd come back to the church, and he wanted prayer. I asked, "Are your parents Christians?" He answered, "Yes, sir. They keep praying for me."

I ask you: was it any "accident" this young man walked into our church? Hardly. He was having his own encounter with Christ. No one pushed him or begged him. Yet, without question, he'd been brought to Jesus. How? I'm convinced it happened through his concerned parents' prayers.

"And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain" (Mark 7:34-35).

Jesus performed a private miracle for this man. And the first voice the deaf man heard was Christ's. Surely Jesus spoke to him, to prove to him he could hear. Oh, how that man must have talked. Out of his mouth poured years of pent-up feelings. Now he could express the inner cry that had no voice before.

I imagine him falling into the Lord's arms, weeping, "Jesus, you heard the voice of my cry" (see Psalm 5:2). Consider the poignancy and power of Psalm 5 to this healed man: "My God...unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer" (5:2-3). The love this man had for Jesus now was his own. He'd had an encounter with the Lord.

Beloved, when you pray for your loved ones, keep in mind Jesus groans over them. He wasn't sighing over just one man in Decapolis. He was weeping over the stifled, inner cries of your children, your unsaved loved ones, and mine. Perhaps you need to change the way you pray over them. Pray that the Holy Ghost goes after them, woos and draws them, stirs and awakens them to a fresh desire for Jesus:

"Lord, take my child, my unsaved loved one, apart from the multitude. Isolate them alone with you. And give them your touch. Let them have a private, personal awakening. May it be a deep, miraculous experience with you."

I must close with this warning: Are you spiritually deaf to God's Word? Are you close-mouthed, unable to speak intimately about Jesus? Then you're without excuse. You know how to get to Jesus. And you know he hears your cry. He's waiting for you to find a place alone with him. Now is the time to draw near to him, so he can draw near to you (see James 4:8).

In Luke 18, we read of a man who went to church to pray. He stood in the back by himself, removed from the crowd. He was so desperate, all he could do was look down and pound his chest (see Luke 18:13). He was using sign language, to say, "Lord, hear my heart's cry. I'm tired of my emptiness. I need an encounter with you. I want to know who you are for myself. You alone understand what's in my heart. And only you know what I'm going through. I can't pray, because I'm all bound up. I need your touch, Jesus. Have mercy on me, a poor sinner" (see 18:13).

Christ said of him, "This man went down to his house justified... for...he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (18:14). May it be so for you as well.

Dearly Beloved:
MAY GOD BLESS AND PRESERVE YOU IN ALL YOUR WAYS.

While writing this letter, I look out my window to a field of brown, dying grass and trees withering in the hot sun. We are in a drought here in the northeast. Yesterday, it was reported that one third of our nation is suffering drought conditions. Add to these concerns the fires burning in many states, and it sounds like the prophetic warning of the prophet Joel who called these disasters signs or evidence of judgment upon his nation.

"The field is wasted...the harvest of the field is perished. The vine is dried up...even all the trees of the field are withered...The seed is rotten under their clods...the corn is withered...herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture...fire hath devoured the pastures...rivers are drying up" (Joel 1:10-20).

When Joel saw these disasters, including invasions of locusts and other devouring insects, he called the nation and the people of God to a fast. "Call a solemn assembly...for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the almighty shall it come" (Joel 1:14-15).

Where do these disasters come from, according to Joel? "...As a destruction from the almighty." It was God who sent fire on Sodom and Gomorrah. It was God who sent the flood to avenge violence and wickedness in Noah's time. All through the Old Testament, God sent famines on nations to avenge his holy people. "Moreover he [God] called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread" (Psalm 105:16).

Jesus warned, "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places" (Matthew 24:7).

I tell you, all these things coming upon our nation and the world simultaneously are not nature "taking its course." It is God, pleading, warning, increasing his call to repentance with each new disaster. Have we forgotten the fall of the Twin Towers? Is America beyond hearing God's prophetic warnings?

God has a holy remnant who fully understands what is happening. They know none of this is normal, that it is not accidental or happenstance. It is God, calling us to fall on our knees and turn from our sins, our blood shedding of innocents, our sexual madness. God help us.

Thank God for those who pray, who hear, who fear the Lord and who plead for God's mercy on our land and an awakening in the church. Your help is needed - both in prayer and in finances. God bless you.

His bondservant,
DAVID WILKERSON

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