

## **Theme: “Be Opened!”**

### **Text: Mark 7:31-37 (EHV)**

<sup>31</sup> Jesus left the region of Tyre again and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of the Decapolis. <sup>32</sup> They brought a man to him who was deaf and had a speech impediment. They pleaded with Jesus to place his hand on him. <sup>33</sup> Jesus took him aside in private, away from the crowd. He put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. <sup>34</sup> After he looked up to heaven, he sighed and said, **“Ephphatha!”** (which means **“Be opened!”**) <sup>35</sup> Immediately the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was set free, and he began to speak plainly. <sup>36</sup> Jesus gave the people strict orders to tell no one, but the more he did so, the more they kept proclaiming it. <sup>37</sup> They were amazed beyond measure and said, **“He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!”**

Put yourself in the shoes of this man in our text. Imagine being unable to hear and pretty much unable to speak, and living in the first century—not in modern times with lots of technological and medical advances that could be extremely helpful for someone in his situation. Imagine how difficult that would be, and how frightening.

Thankfully, it appears this man also had people who cared for him in the best possible way. Our text says in v. 32, **“They brought a man to him [Jesus] who was deaf and had a speech impediment. They pleaded with Jesus to place his hand on him.”** Whoever the **“they”** were in this crowd of people, **“they”** did the right thing. There was no doctor who could heal this man, but they knew that Jesus could.

Again, put yourself in the shoes of this man as Jesus takes you **“aside in private, away from the crowd”** (v. 33) and begins to perform the most blessed “sign language” ever! Our text says, **“He put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. <sup>34</sup> After he looked up to heaven, he sighed and said, “Ephphatha!” (which means “Be opened!”).** Again, put yourself in this man’s shoes and imagine how grateful, how overwhelmed you’d be when after Jesus says, **“Ephphatha!” “Be opened!” “Immediately the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was set free, and he began to speak plainly”** (v. 35). Imagine how much was actually “opened” up to this man when Jesus opened his ears and unloosed his tongue. His entire life was now “opened” up because of Jesus. The crowd that had gathered there that day reacts appropriately to this miracle, **They were amazed beyond measure and said, “He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!”** (v. 37).

Can we relate to this man in our text? Maybe we don’t share the same *physical* disabilities as this man, but we certainly can relate to him in a *spiritual* sense. We too were in desperate need of Jesus to come to us and speak **“Ephphatha!” “Be opened!”** Jesus has opened our ears by opening our hearts to hear and believe His Word. Think of how much was actually “opened” up to us when Jesus opened our ears and hearts to His Word! Life—real life—eternal life was “opened” to us! As our Scripture reading from James reminded us, this Word that Jesus has **“planted in you. It is able to save your souls”** (James 1:21 EHV).

That is a pure gift of His grace and an astounding miracle Jesus performed for us in “opening” up our ears and hearts to hear and believe His Word. In our natural state we are spiritually “deaf.” Left to our own powers, our ears and hearts can do nothing but reject Jesus and His Word. Jesus had to reach out to us with compassion and perform a miracle. No, He didn’t physically touch our ears, like He did for the man in our text, but He did speak **“Ephphatha!” “Be opened!”** with His very own Words. The Bible tells us, **“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”**

**(Romans 10:17).** That Word, the very Word of God, had the power to open our deaf ears and spiritually dead hearts to believe the “Good News,” that Jesus is the Son of God, our Savior, who lived, died, and rose again to give us forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven with Him.

But what about our mouths? Have those been “opened” by Jesus as well? This man’s **“tongue was set free, and he began to speak plainly” (v. 35)** after Jesus touched it. But in the very next verse we read something that might surprise and confuse us: **“Jesus gave the people strict orders to tell no one, but the more he did so, the more they kept proclaiming it” (v. 36).** Why on earth would Jesus command people NOT to tell others about the miracles He performed?

Well, the Jewish people of Jesus’ day had a false perception of the coming Messiah. They believed He would be a political and military Messiah who would set up an earthly kingdom and rule from His throne in Jerusalem, like His ancestor, King David of the Old Testament. Our text tells us that Jesus performed this miracle **“within the region of the Decapolis” (v. 31)** a region that was predominantly Gentile (non-Jews). Jesus wanted to make sure that the people of this predominantly Gentile region did not think that He had come to organize a political insurrection. He did not want them spreading the news of this miracle, which was proof that He was the Christ, the Messiah, if that would be the perception among the people about who the Messiah was. Jesus had come as the Messiah, yes, but that meant He had come to lay down His life for the sins of the world and by His resurrection would declare the Kingdom of Heaven **“Ephphatha!” “Be opened!”**

This command of Jesus no longer applies now that He has died and risen again to show the world what it truly means that He is the Messiah. In fact, at the end of the Gospel of Mark Jesus gives all of His disciples, His believers, the exact opposite command: **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15 EHV).**

So why do we so often live like Jesus has given us **“strict orders to tell no one” (v. 36)**, like He did to the people in our text? We need to remember that Jesus has not only “opened” our ears and hearts through His Word, He’s also “opened” our mouths and **“set free”** our tongues to praise Him and spread the Good News about the miracles He has done for us and all people, especially the miracle of salvation He won for all on that cross of Calvary! Remember what the people did after they witnessed this miracle—even after **“Jesus gave the people strict orders to tell no one?”** Our text tells us **“but the more he did so, the more they kept proclaiming it” (v. 37).**

May that be said of us as well! The more we hear and receive the miracles of Jesus in our lives, the more we keep on proclaiming it—praising Him and proclaiming His Word, yes, while we are here together in His house, but also as we go about our lives among others throughout the week.

So, we pray:

*Dear Jesus, You are the one who has spoken **“Ephphatha!” “Be opened!”** to our ears and hearts and have miraculously brought us to saving faith in You. We pray that You would also continue to speak Your **“Ephphatha!” “Be opened!”** to our lips and tongues that we may praise You and proclaim the “Good News” of Your salvation to all people, so that they too may know that You, dear Savior, have “opened” the gates of heaven. Forgive us for the times we’ve kept silent when we should have spoken Your Word, and give us more opportunities to do so. Give us the Words—Your Words—to speak when those opportunities arise. In Your saving name we pray. Amen.*