

April 7, 2019

Mark 7:25-37 – Includes

Introduction

After having been in and around Galilee for some time, this week's lesson begins describing how Jesus traveled to a couple of other locations. First, Jesus went to a city named Sidon, in the region of Tyre. After He leaves Sidon, Jesus next goes to the Decapolis. In each location, Jesus met individuals who had serious needs. In the passage for today, we will see how Jesus responded to each situation and discover what we can learn about the Lord.

The Humble (Mark 7:25-30). First, Jesus travelled northeast to the city of Sidon. Sidon was located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Earlier in Mark's Gospel, we are told that people came from this area to follow Jesus "because they heard about everything He was doing" (Mark 3:8). On this journey, Mark reported that Jesus "did not want anyone to know" that He was in the area (Mark 7: 24). However, based on His ministry up to this point, it should not surprise us that the very next phrase in the same verse states, "He could not escape notice." Once word gets out that Jesus is in the area, one woman comes to Him with an urgent need. This lady is described simply as a woman who "was Greek, a Syrophenician by birth (Mark 7:26). In other words, she was a native of that region. She came to Jesus because her "daughter had an unclean spirit" (Mark 7:25). On at least two previous occasions, Jesus has encountered unclean spirits or demons (Mark 3:11; 5:1-20). In this situation, the woman had a simple request. She asked Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter (Mark 7:26). Jesus's response is not quite what we might expect. In fact, one is left wondering if Jesus would heal the little girl or not. Their conversation is quite illuminating.

After the woman asks for her daughter to be healed, Jesus responded that the children needed to be fed first because it was not right to give the children's bread to dogs (Mark 7:27). Fully understanding the response of Jesus and His references to "the children" (Israel) and "the dogs" (Gentiles), the woman's reply was stunning. She stated, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs" (Mark 7:28). Hearing this, Jesus healed her daughter and cast the demon out (Mark 7:29). He did this from a distance, not needing to see the little girl or touch her.

The Outsider (Mark 7:31-35). In typical fashion, Mark moves us from one story in the life of Jesus to the next without much elaboration. When Jesus left the region of Tyre, He travelled into the Decapolis. The word "Decapolis" is a Greek term which means ten cities. These ten cities lay on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. Here, Jesus encountered a "deaf man who had difficulty speaking" (Mark 7:32). Mark is not very specific at this point. For example, Mark does not state the name of the deaf man nor the names of the people that brought him to Jesus. Interestingly, Jesus took the man "away from the crowd in private" (Mark 7:33). At this point, Jesus placed "his fingers in the man's ears and spitting, he touched his tongue" (Mark 7:33). Next, He uttered an Aramaic word which means, "be opened." The Bible says that "Immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak clearly" (Mark 7:35). Once the people saw this, they stated, "He has done everything well" (Mark 7:37).

Conclusion

Today's lesson highlights a couple of features of the ministry of Jesus which merit our attention. First, Jesus had authority to heal in a variety of capacities. He could simply cast out a demon from a distance without even seeing the demon-possessed girl. Or, He could touch deaf ears and a muted tongue to allow them to function as they were created to function. Second, Jesus' desire to meet the needs of people continues to be stressed by Mark. Truly, as Mark 7:37 claims, He does everything well.