



**Sermon-Based Study Guide**  
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 Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church ♦ August 1, 2010

**Sermon Title: Speaking Plainly**

Sermon Text: Mark 7:31-37

Related Texts: Isaiah 35

**I. Start It – Connecting With One Another**

Yogi Berra has become synonymous with confusing and unclear speech. Here are two examples: “You’ve got to be very careful if you don’t know where you are going, because you might not get there.” And “You better cut the pizza in four pieces because I’m not hungry enough to eat six.” How have you been affected by the unclear communication of others? Have you ever been unclear in your communication? What was the result?

**II. Introduction**

Jesus is on the move. He’s gone from Galilee (to escape the conflict and threats) to Tyre. In this passage we see him moving from there in a circuitous route through Sidon, through the region of Syria (Tetrarchy of Herod Philip) and into the region of the Decapolis (“Ten Cities”). Mark shows us how Jesus’ influence and notoriety has grown in these predominantly Gentile areas, a reinforcement of the previous event in which the woman is reminded that the “dogs” (Gentiles) will one day become the “children” (people of God).

**III. Study the Text –Read the Gospel of Mark 7:31-37**

- 1) Trace Jesus’ route on the map (Sidon is above Tyre at the top center of this map). How long do you imagine it took him to make this trip? Have you experienced God leading you in what seemed like a very long, drawn out, and “round-about” way? What enabled you to persevere through that kind of experience?
- 2) Why do you think there has been no mention of the twelve disciples since Jesus’ trip to Tyre began (Mark 7:24)?
- 3) Notice the parallels between verse 32 and Mark 2:3-5. What is different in the two events?
- 4) Why do you think Jesus took the deaf and significantly mute man away from the crowd – verse 33? What does this suggest about how the way God works in our lives and in the world today? What does it suggest about Jesus’ concern for the man? For you?
- 5) Look at the detail Mark gives about the process of Jesus healing the man in verses 33 and 34 – fingers in his ears, spittle touched to the man’s tongue, a prayerful gaze upward, a deep sigh (The Greek word is “stenazo” which can mean: a groan within one’s self due to an undesirable circumstance or as an expression of power ready to act), and a command



“ephhatha” – the Aramaic for “be opened.” Why do you think Mark records so much detail? If Jesus had taken the man away from the crowd, how would all this detail have been observed? By whom?

- 6) It is significant to note that the command “be opened” is the same Greek word (dianoiksthatie) that is found in the Greek version of Isaiah 35:5 - “be unstopped.” Look at Isaiah 35:1-6. How is the description of God’s redemptive activity given here actualized by what is happening in Mark 7:31-37?
- 7) Verse 35. The man’s ears are opened, he can hear physically. How is this a metaphor for his ability to now hear God’s voice? What does this suggest about God’s activity today that enables people to hear and understand the message of the gospel?
- 8) Notice the man’s response to having his hearing restored and his tongue loosened from its bonds is that he began to speak plainly. How would this have impacted this man? Changed his life? Redefined his relationships? Improved his over all well-being?
- 9) In verses 36 and 37 Mark tells us Jesus continued to command them not to tell about this but the people continued to talk about it. As we have seen before (1:27, 2:12, 4:41, 5:20, 5:42), the people are filled with awe and amazement. What we haven’t seen to this point is the heralding (“they kept **talking** about it” = literally “they kept **heralding** it”). The people are speaking plainly, heralding Jesus as the healer, proclaiming the good deeds he has done, and announcing good news. Jesus had commissioned his disciples to do this (6:8-13), now the people who witnessed the deaf-mute man’s healing are doing this. In what ways do you herald the good news about the things Jesus has done in your life?

#### **IV. Pray It – Reflection and Responding in Prayer**

Take some time to think through how you can “speak plainly” about your experience of faith in Jesus. What things would you want to say about:

- 1) How did you come to trust in Jesus?
- 2) How does following Jesus impact your life?

Can you think of situations in which you might be able to “steer” the conversation toward spiritual things? Can you think of how you would speak plainly about your love for and trust in Jesus in those situations?

Pray for opportunities with friends, family, and neighbors to “herald” the things Jesus has done in your life and the significance of knowing God through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

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*You’ve got a story to tell. What was your life like before you encountered Jesus? How did you end up putting your trust in him? How has your life been changed since? You may not think your testimony is sufficiently spectacular, but take heart: people are inevitably drawn to personal stories. God can use even the most routine tale to open the hearts of your seeking friends.*

*Lee Stroebel and Mark Mittleberg in The Unexpected Adventure*