

Mark 7:31-37

Pentecost 15; September 8 & 9, 2024

Can You Live Without Your Smartphone? Have you ever thought or said: *"I can quit using my Smartphone anytime."* Apple says that their I-phone 15 is *"Designed to be loved."* Samsung tells us: *"Take Your Passions Further... Designed for a Premium Experience Today and Beyond."* Google tells us that we need to *"All pro. Pure magic. Engineered by Google and designed for AI, it's the most powerful Pixel yet."* Wouldn't you want a phone that can fulfill all those promises? Yet, even though we might say that we don't need all that technology, think of how many of us feel when you get to the store and realize that you don't have your phone with you. It almost feels like you can't function without it. It is almost like you have to go through withdrawal?

Whether we like it or not, the smart phone has changed our lives? It has changed the culture that we live in. It changes how we travel. Not sure how to get to somewhere? Use your phone. Here something on the radio when traveling and you want to learn more, just "google it." Right? Someone once said that *"the time between not knowing and knowing is so brief, that knowing now feels exactly like not knowing."* That little phone in your pocket can access information of the world. There is hardly a thing that we cannot find on our phones. There is hardly a thing that we cannot do on our phones. If you think that this doesn't affect you, try going without your phone for a day and see how you feel? Yet, there is probably some things that we have loss because of our phones. I think that there are times that we have lost the wonderment in life. With all that information at our fingertips, we see more than ever the brokenness of this world. When we see all that brokenness, we begin to wonder: *Why does God work the way he does? Why doesn't God fix the brokenness of the world?*

Perhaps, that may have been how some people felt in our text this morning. Mark writes: **"Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him."** The area that was called the **"Decapolis"** was primarily a non-Jewish area. It was an area that was populated by Gentiles. However, Jesus had been in this area before. The last time he was he had driven out demons from two men. These two men had been possessed by many demons, hundreds, if not thousands. When Jesus cast those demons, they entered a herd of pigs numbering about 2,000 who all rushed over a steep bank and drowned in the Sea of Galilee. Many of the people who were there, did not see Jesus as a Savior. They saw him as a threat to their economy. They were afraid of that kind of power that a man could possess. In fact, they begged him to leave.

Jesus now came back to that area. He was now here to show them once again that he was the Savior who had come to fix the brokenness of this world. Mark writes: **"There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him."** For us those words of Mark are just a statement of facts. However, words that God records are words that matter. They are not just words that simply are setting the scene for what Jesus is about to do. These words that Mark writes are much more than words just setting up a scene. They are words that are connecting the words of the prophet Isaiah to Jesus.

Isaiah had written these words. **"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy,"** (Isaiah 35:5-6) **"and those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."** (Isaiah 35:10)

When God had finished creating this world, Moses writes these words: **"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus, the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array."** (Genesis 1:31-2:1) Then sin entered this world. Ever since that first sin that was committed by Adam and Eve, this world became broken. No human being could fix the problem of sin in this world. No one could make this world restored. No one except God. Isaiah describes what this world will be like in the future when the Savior will come. He will take broken people and open the eyes of the blind, ears of the deaf will be able to hear, the lame will leap like a deer, and the mute will be able to speak and shout for joy.

That's what Jesus wanted this man to see. So, what does Jesus do? He takes this man off by himself. He wants to communicate with him in a way that he could understand. He doesn't want all the distractions that may have interrupted this event if he did this in the crowd. **"After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!"). At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly."** Jesus touches his ears, which could not hear. He looks to heaven to show where the help is going to come from. He touches the tongue of the man, and literally unties the string or the chain that was wrapped around his tongue so that it was loosened so now he could speak.

He wanted this man to see that he was the Savior that Isaiah had spoken about in Isaiah 35. That's what Mark wants his readers to see as well. Jesus had come to restore what had been broken after he created this world. The creator will re-create this world. The world that was broken by sin would once again be restored. The problem of sin would be fixed with the blood of Jesus. When this life is over, we will see what Isaiah describes. We will see God use the bad things in the world to be worked out for our good. Jesus wants this man to see this healing is only a small window into this new world that will be restored by Jesus.

So, what happened next? **"At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."** They couldn't get this quiet. They needed to tell. They needed to tell that Jesus was about to do what God had promised in the Garden of Eden. They needed to tell that Jesus was the One that Isaiah had spoken about. This is the Savior of this world. How can anyone keep that quiet?

I have to admit it – I would have a hard time to not have my cell phone. It would be hard to give up all the access to information that I have at my fingertips. I'm going to guess that I am not alone today with that thought. May God help us to see that God has brought us some news that is greater than any news in this world. May we be like the people in our Gospel Lesson today and not keep quiet as to what our God has done for us in Jesus. May God grant it. Amen.