##### **EPHPHATHA! BE OPENED!**

Mark 7:31-37

Key Verse 34

He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!")

**Introduction**

Today's passage is a story about the changed people of the Decapolis who brought a man who was deaf and mute. They begged Jesus' mercy to heal the man. In this story we learn how a changed man in Jesus is influential and makes the world a paradise. In this passage we also learn Jesus’ willingness to heal the man in a unique way. Jesus heals him saying, “Be opened!” May Jesus open our ears to his word and loosen our tongues to speak it.

1. Read verses 31-32. Where did Jesus travel and where was his destination? (31) What did the Decapolis people ask Jesus to do? (32) Why was it so terrible to be deaf-mute? Can you think of any examples of spiritual deafness?

1-1, Read verses 31-32.

31 Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis.[[h](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mark+7+&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24495h)] 32 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.

1-2, Where did Jesus travel and where was his destination? (31)

***31 Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis.***

* In the previous passage, Jesus granted the request of a Greek woman and drove the demon out of her daughter. We learned from this woman that when we cry out to Jesus in humble faith, he will grant our request.
* That incident took place in Tyre, a coastal port city on the Mediterranean Sea. It was Gentile territory.
* Now Jesus leaves Tyre, goes north through Sidon, down to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis.

1-3, What did the Decapolis people ask Jesus to do? (32)

***32 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 first story of the Decapolis people appears in Mark 5:1-20. Jesus showed his' great shepherd heart. In order to rescue a man who had been possessed by 6,000 demons, Jesus ruined the pig industry of Gerasa. The people asked Jesus to leave due to the fear that their business would be ruined because of Jesus.
* But Jesus told him, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" (5:19). Obviously, the man accepted the mission of evangelizing the Decapolis, ten cities.
* In the past, the people of the Decapolis didn't care about their neighbors. To them, pigs were very important. But thanks to the man’s continuous life testimony, they must have slowly but steadfastly changed to the people of compassion.
* But this time, Jesus and his twelve disciples arrived there again. Some people brought to him a man who was deaf and dumb, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.
* What a great change! Such business-oriented men to whom money was god, were changed until they were mindful of a deaf and dumb man and begged the Messiah's mercy would extend to him.
* God established this country as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole world.
* Who are our immediate neighbors? They are those who are in need of God's mercy. They are those under the torment of the devil.
* We must make the lost souls our neighbors and give them the word of life through one-to-one Bible study. May God use America as a good neighbor!

1-4, Why was it so terrible to be deaf-mute?

* He could not talk, and could hardly talk. We don’t know how he had become deaf. If a person is deaf from birth, they have very little chance of speaking well.
* So it was not likely that he was deaf from his birth for he could speak somewhat. I can’t imagine what it would be like to be deaf and mute.
* Hearing and speaking are the basis of all our relationships. A deaf man today could not use the telephone or listen to the radio.
* Even television or movies would be not be good unless they had captions. This man could not hear the beautiful songs.
* In fact he must have lived a very sorrowful lonely life. Most people could not understand him at all, except the few people who knew him well.
* He lived in a silent, lonely, isolated world as if he was locked inside a glass box. He could not really feel connected with those around him.
* Whoever has been blessed with the gift of hearing and speech must not take it for granted. We must thank God for the ability to hear and speak.

1-5, Can you think of any examples of spiritual deafness?

* If a man doesn’t use his ears or mouth for God’s glory, then he is spiritually deaf or mute. If we cannot hear God through his word, then we are spiritually deaf.
* Jesus often said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (4:9,23) If a man does not want to hear the word of God, then he is spiritually deaf.
* Sometimes we try to hear from others only, and beg their advice rather than to rely on God’s word of truth. If we rely on what others say make us spiritually deaf.
* We have to be careful not to become spiritually mute and close our ears to God. So many people please their itching ears through music and the internet.
* God is trying to speak to us through his word. Can you hear him? Let’s look at ourselves honestly before God and try to hear His words.
* What does it mean to be spiritually mute? To be spiritually mute is to not speak up for God and the truth when we have an opportunity to do so.
* Even though we have freedom of speech, in our human nature we are much more comfortable talking about sports, fashion or technology than our faith in Jesus.
* Most people like to speak about what is politically correct so as not to offend others. Fear of rejection deprive a man of speech and make him silent.
* Remember Peter on the night of Jesus’ arrest? Usually he was a loud mouth but that night he became spiritually mute. He could not speak up for Jesus. Rather he lied, saying he didn’t even know Jesus. His fear made him mute.
* But after he met the Risen Christ, he was changed and no longer spiritually mute. He became a bold witness of Jesus’ resurrection.
* If we only talk about worldly things, then we are spiritually mute. If we have no idea what to say or pray, we are spiritually mute.
* When we come to Jesus and receive the word of God. Then we know what to say and how to pray. We can speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15) and plant faith and love for God in others.

2. Read verses 33-34. What did Jesus do and say? How did Jesus’ actions reveal his love for this helpless man? What can we learn about Jesus?

2-1, Read verses 33-34.

33 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. 34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, *“Ephphatha!”* (which means “Be opened!”).

2-2, What did Jesus do and say?

***33 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. 34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “Ephphatha!” (which means “Be opened!”).***

* Jesus took him aside, away from the crowd. Jesus put his fingers into this man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue.
* He looked up to heaven with a deep sigh and said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!").

2-3, How did Jesus’ actions reveal his love for this helpless man?

2-4, What can we learn about Jesus?

* Jesus first took the deaf-mute man away from the crowd. In this way, Jesus showed personal attention and love to this man.
* He drew him away from the crowd. Jesus wanted the man’s full attention. Next, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears.
* Then Jesus’ spit and touched the man’s tongue. Perhaps Jesus did these things since they were very visible and the man could not hear.
* Jesus used a curious manner in healing this man. Throughout His ministry, Jesus used many different ways of healing. He healed with a word, healed without a word, healed in response to one’s faith, healed in response to the faith of another, healed those who asked, and healed those He approached.
* Jesus didn’t want to be tied down to any “one method” to show that His power was not dependent on any method but on the sovereign power of God.
* Many people cared about this man, and perhaps many had prayed for his healing. But no one ever stuck their fingers in his ears and spit on his tongue like this.
* Jesus did something completely new to catch this man’s attention because He could not catch his attention normally.
* He looked up to heaven. Maybe Jesus shows his prayer as a good example to his disciples to let them know how to help others by prayer first.
* He sighed deeply. The ‘sigh’ was an inward groan, our Lord’s compassionate response to the pain and sorrow sin has brought into the world. It was also a prayer to the Father on behalf of the handicapped man.

Romans 8:22-27 reads,

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. 26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.*

* “Ephphatha!” (which in Aramaic means, “Be opened!”). Although the man could not hear, he could see what Jesus was doing.
* This was just like at the beginning of creation God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. When Jesus commanded, “Be opened!”.
* It is amazing for such Almighty God Creator stooped down to help this deaf-mute man with compassion and humility.

3. Read verses 35-37. What was the result of Jesus’ interaction with the man? (35) What instructions did Jesus give the people? (36a) How did the people respond to Jesus? (36b, 37) What does this event reveal about who Jesus is? (Isa 35:5,6)

3-1, Read verses 35-37.

35 At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. 36 Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. 37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

3-2, What was the result of Jesus’ interaction with the man? (35)

***35 At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.***

* At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.
* When Jesus commanded, “Be opened!”, the man’s ears were opened, just as Jesus commanded and willed it.
* Just like when Jesus said to the stormy sea, “Quiet! Be still!”, the wind died down and it was completely calm (4:39).
* The almighty power of God is in the word of Jesus. Jesus’ word can heal and save us.
* Through Jesus’ loving touch and powerful word, the man could hear and speak plainly. He was completely restored.
* Then a whole new world opened up to this man; he had a rich new life full of sounds and the ability to communicate his thoughts.
* Now he could speak and sing praises to God and pray out loud. He could finally say to his mom, “I love you but I don’t like red meat.”
* But most of all he could testify to the wonderful grace of Jesus. This is how we must use our mouths for the glory of God.
* We must come to Jesus and receive his healing touch and living word. Jesus can loosen our tongues to speak praises to God.
* When we have the word of God and the Holy Spirit, we can speak the living word of God. We can know what to pray. We can testify to others of Jesus’ saving grace, love and power.

3-3, What instructions did Jesus give the people? (36a)

***36 Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone.***

3-4, How did the people respond to Jesus? (36b, 37)

***But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. 37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”***

* At the end of this short story, Jesus commanded the people there not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it.
* They were spiritually deaf since they acted like they didn’t hear Jesus. Isn’t it hard to keep good news a secret?
* People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

3-5, What does this event reveal about who Jesus is? (Isa 35:5,6)

***Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.6 Then will the lame leap like a deer,and the mute tongue shout for joy.***

* Their words echoed the words of the prophet Isaiah, written 700 years earlier: “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.”
* Jesus is the mighty God who can give hearing to the deaf and speech to the mute. Jesus is the giver of life.
* Let’s come to Jesus and have our ears opened to the word of God and our tongues loosened to speak it. Let’s bring others to Jesus too.

**Conclusion**

Today we studied about how one man's change in Jesus is greatly influential. One crazy man's change changed the region of the Decapolis from a materialistic town to a blessed place to show mercy for others. We also learn who is our neighbor. Our neighbor is God's lost sheep. We must care for them through one-to-one Bible study. May God richly bless us to hear and speak God’s words in this spiritually arid world so that people may know Jesus in and through our testimony. Amen.

**One word: Be opened!**