

August 24, 2025

HE MAKES ALL THINGS NEW
Mark 7:31-37
(17 of 22 in a series through Mark 1-9)

If I could snap my fingers and get rid of the internet, I think I would. The damage done with easily accessible pornographic images or all the sin that social media has led to is enough for me to say we were better without it. Now, I'd miss checking the weather or listening to good podcasts, but overall I think we were better without it. But I don't mean to suggest that the internet hasn't given us gifts—in addition to constant weather updates and good podcasts. I can think of several things that have edified me online, and one of them is a video that you may too be aware of.¹ I think it was put out by Google. I'm unsure, but its aim is to show the complexities and vastness of our universe and of us as human beings. The video begins with a lady lying on the ground outside of the headquarters at Google, and the camera is on her eye. And then it zooms out until its thousands of lightyears away. I'm sure we're guessing at much of this (because how in the world would we know things thousands of lightyears away?), but it's fascinating. It makes you realize just how small we are in comparison to the vastness of the universe.

But then, there's a second part of the video, and I think this part may be even more fascinating. After zooming all the way out into the vastness of space, the camera zooms in again, going right back to that girl lying in the grass, but it doesn't stop there. It then zooms into her eye, going all the way down to the level of pre-atomic particles. Again, it's a fascinating video. And though I feel confident that there are about a thousand things you can do better than watch videos, if you're going to watch one, it's pretty fascinating. As I mentioned, I've not forgotten it.

I bring this up, however, not because I want to make a recommendation for internet browsing but because I want to approach our text this morning (Mark 7:31-37) in a similar way to that video once it reached the point of spanning out all the way to space and began to dive back in to look at this woman and the complexities of the makeup of her eye. I want to walk through this story, noting a few things that we see about Jesus and how he works, and, as I do so, I want to start out really broad—on the cosmic level—and then slowly work our way narrower in our observations until we see the particularities of how Jesus deals with this specific man (and by extension, how he deals with us). So, let's walk through the story, and then I'll pull out some observations and applications.

The story picks up where we left off last week as Jesus had gone to Tyre and healed the Syrophenician woman's daughter. Now, we're told he had left Tyre and gone through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee in the Decapolis. And as he arrives in this region of the Decapolis, there are people there to meet him.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Are9dDbW24>. Accessed on August 18, 2025.

Now, I know that by this point in Mark's gospel, it's not surprising that there are crowds to meet Jesus when he arrives at a new place. This seems to happen everywhere he goes, and even when he wants to be left alone, people—even great crowds—seem to find him. But there's something interesting about the fact that there is a group of people in this particular region coming to Jesus in order that he might heal a man. You see, we've been to the Decapolis before. Remember in chapter 5 when Jesus sailed across the sea, landed in the country of the Gerasenes, and healed the man with a legion of demons? Well, two things happened after that. First, the crowds there begged Jesus to leave (and Jesus did). And, second, we're told at the very end of that section that the man who'd been rescued from the demonic torment he'd suffered "went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him" (5:20). So, it may well be that the reason there are people coming to Jesus now in order for him to heal someone is because that man's testimony had borne fruit. Though many from that region had wanted Jesus to leave earlier, because of the witness of this man, it seems that many others had become eager for him to arrive in their territory again. And here he was.

We're told that the people brought to Jesus a man "who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hands on him" (v. 32). This isn't necessarily odd because Jesus had healed multitudes prior to this. But the way he approaches this specific situation *is* odd. We've seen Jesus heal by laying his hands on some and just speaking a word for others. But in this situation, we're told that Jesus took this man aside from the crowd privately and then "put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he signed and said, 'Ephphatha,' that is 'Be opened.' And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly" (vv. 33-35). There are a number odd elements in that—from the isolation of the man from the crowds, to the finger in the ear and on the tongue, to the sigh, and so on. But I want to hold off on answering why Jesus heals in this manner just for a second and instead continue to the end of the story.

As the man is healed, Jesus charged the people to tell no one. And though Jesus' had issued that charge in Jewish territory before, this is the first time he'd given this charge in Gentile territory. In fact, the last time Jesus had been to this region, he'd told the man he'd delivered from demonic torment to "go home to [his] friends and tell them how much the Lord had done for [him]" (5:19). And I argued then (as we looked at that text) that this made sense in light of the fact that the Jews had a preconceived notion of who the Messiah might be, and so Jesus would keep word of his work silent there lest there develop misconceptions about just what kind of Messiah he was and what he'd come to do. Most Jews, for example, surely would have anticipated the Messiah coming to overthrow Roman rule. The Gentiles, however, had no preconception of who this Jewish Messiah would be, and so Jesus could spread his fame widely there.

And yet now Jesus is telling them not to tell others what he'd done. Why? My guess—and it's only a guess—is that by this point the ignorance had dissipated among the Gentiles about what all Jesus might do as this Jewish Messiah coming to rule over the whole world. Perhaps even among the Gentiles, at this point, there was developing an anticipation of Jesus' clash with Rome.

Therefore, Jesus was now treating Gentile territory the same way he was treating Jewish territory—that is, as a people who needed cautioned against developing too many ideas of what he had come to do.

But regardless of Jesus' warning, they proclaimed loudly and widely what he'd done. In fact, Mark tells us that as Jesus repeatedly warned them to say nothing, they said all the more. Specifically, they were saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak" (v. 37). And that's our story.

But why did Mark give us this story? I mean, in one sense, it adds nothing to Jesus' work. We know Jesus has healed many sick. This is just one more instance. Moreover, I assume he's healed the deaf and mute before, so this particular disability isn't anything new. And making things more intriguing, Mark is the only one who gives us this story. If you'd read Matthew 15, you'd see that Matthew has been paralleling what we've seen in Mark 7 these past few weeks, but at this very point their reporting of Jesus' ministry goes different ways. Whereas Mark tells Jesus healing this one deaf and mute man, Matthew simply gives a summary paragraph telling us that Jesus healed many, including the lame, blind, crippled, mute, etc. (Matt 15:29-31). So why did Mark want to highlight this story in particular and give all the details he did? I think most importantly that it was because he wanted to show us that Jesus came to bring a new creation. That is Jesus comes to make all things new.

Jesus comes to make all things new

Our ultimate hope as believers isn't simply to die. Now, don't get me wrong; that's gain. Leaving this world of sorrows and our souls dwelling with the Lord is a good thing. Our loved ones who have died in Christ are in a better position. But the believer's *ultimate* hope lies beyond that. We await the day when the Lord will return and make everything new. We long for the day when the earth itself will be free from the curse of sin, it's bondage to decay, and become a new creation, free from all sin and its effects. We long for the day when our bodies will be raised from the dead and made perfect so that we can live in this glorious new creation forever with our Lord in bodies that aren't prone to decay and can't die. Well, in telling this story, I think Mark is showing his readers that this is exactly what Jesus has come to ultimately do.

Now, why do I say that Mark is signaling that truth to us in this story of Jesus healing a deaf man with a speech impediment? Let me give you a few reasons. First, there are many echoes of Isaiah 35:1-10 in our text. Let me show that to you from Isaiah 35. When you read Isaiah 35, you first notice that it is a picture of God bringing restoration to the created order. The wilderness and dry land are blossoming with life, people are being made new, sorrow is fleeing away. It's a picture of God bringing a new creation. Isaiah tells us of this once dried out and decaying landscape, "It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God" (Is 35:2).

Okay, but (again) why say that this story in Mark 7:31-35 connects us to Isaiah 35? The reality is that there are all kinds of connections. First, in Isaiah 35:2 there is the mention of the glory of Lebanon. Now, hold that for a second. Many commentators mention that according to Mark's geographical markers in our story, Jesus takes a weird route in his travels. When Mark tells us that Jesus went through Sidon to get where he is, it's like going north in order to go south. So, why mention this odd travel detail? I think it may be because this region containing Tyre and Sidon was known in Isaiah's day as Lebanon—the very place that Isaiah 35 mentions about being made new. But the connections don't stop there.

We're told in Isaiah 35 that when the Lord brings this work of new creation (making all things new), it's not just that the earth will be transformed, but illness and infirmities will be taken away. Specifically, we're told, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy" (Is 35:5-6). This verse not only mentions the ears of the deaf being unstopped—the very thing Jesus did—but also the mute singing for joy. So, Isaiah 35 discusses the very two disabilities that Jesus heals in our story. But there's a detail here that connects even more strongly to our text in Mark.

In Mark 7:32, we're told that the man that Jesus healed had a speech impediment. That's how the ESV translates the Greek word *μογιλάλον* (*mogilalon*). That word only occurs once in the entire Greek New Testament—right here in Mark. Well, we might ask, does it occur anywhere else in the entire Bible? After all, the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek (known as the *Septuagint*), and the New Testament writers often rely on this OT Greek translation, so we can search and see if this Greek word ever occurs in the Old Testament. And guess what? It does—only once. Guess where? It's Isaiah 35:6 when Isaiah prophesies of this day when all will be made new, including the tongue of the *mute*. So, in our story (that is exclusive to Mark), Mark uses the precise word used in Isaiah where the prophet foretells of God's coming work of new creation—and these end up being the only two places in the whole Bible where this word is used. It seems that Mark is obviously and intentionally connecting this story to Isaiah 35.

Then, there is one other Isaiah 35 connection. Remember in Mark 7 where Mark mentions that right before Jesus said, "Be opened" (so that the man's ears and tongue were opened and released to speak), Jesus sighed. That's odd, isn't it? If it expresses Jesus' sorrow or groaning about the effects of sin in this world—which would make sense—we never get news of him doing this prior to other healings. Why, then, does Mark tell us that Jesus sighed before performing this miracle that would picture his work of making all things new?

I think this answer is another linguistic connection with Isaiah 35. Obviously the word "sighed" in our text is a verb, but the noun form of that verb is found in Isaiah 35. In verse 10 Isaiah says, "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Therefore, Isaiah tells us that when the Lord brings about his work of new creation, sighing will flee away, and Mark tells us that Jesus sighs right before freeing this man from the bondage he'd known being deaf and mute. It's as if Jesus sighs just prior to healing in order to say, "I'm demonstrating that this world filled with sorrow and sighs will be freed from its bondage to decay,

just like this man is about to be.” Nor, do I think it’s by mistake that Paul will later tell us that creation is groaning to be set free from its bondage to decay, just as we groan for that great day when our bodies and all else will be made new. And the words “groaning” and “groan” are from the same word translated “sighed” in our text—all in a text where Paul is talking about the coming new creation (Rom 8:22-23).

And if all of that isn’t enough for us to see that Mark is signaling that Jesus comes to bring a new creation, making all things new, there is one more element. The crowd’s praise of Jesus is unique in Mark’s gospel, isn’t it? Prior to this, we’ve been told the crowds marveled, were amazed, or were astounded. But here we’re told that they say of Jesus, “He has done all things well,” language which reminds us of the first creation where our God created all things and Moses tells us, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Just as God created the world in the beginning, part of Jesus’ redeeming work will be to recreate this world, freeing it from the curse of sin.

I think that’s the main reason Mark writes this unique story. He wants to remind us that Jesus comes to make all things new. He comes to fulfil the picture of Isaiah 35. We’ve only ever known our bodies and this creation with the stain of sin and death. We and this world are in bondage to decay. But one day Jesus will return, and when he does, our bodies will be set free from decay as will the entire creation itself, and all will be made new so that we can enjoy a glorious new creation in resurrected bodies with our Lord forever. That’s what Mark is showing us here. But that’s not all. We’re also reminded that Jesus will populate his new creation with his ransomed people from all nations.

Jesus will populate his new creation with his ransomed people from all nations

I don’t want to take too long on this, but we need to see this point as well. It’s not by mistake that Mark is reminding us that Jesus comes to bring about a new creation, making all things new, while telling about one of Jesus’ healing stories in *Gentile* territory. Mark has reminded us that Jesus’ work of redemption isn’t contained to a strip of land in the Middle East, but he’s also reminding us that it isn’t restricted to believing Jews either. He’s going to transform the entire creation and bring to himself a people from every tongue, tribe, and nation. And would we expect anything less than the one who is Lord of all the earth? Now, we saw this last week, so I won’t linger, but I do want us to see this. But then I want to zoom in a little more and show that Jesus cares for his ransomed people intimately and particularly.

Jesus cares for his ransomed people intimately and particularly

We’ve seen his cosmic purpose to make a new creation, his purpose to redeem a people for himself from every nation, and, finally, we can zoom in even more to see his ability to care for his ransomed people intimately and particularly. We see this in the text with the way that he heals this deaf man with a speech impediment.

We've already noted that it was odd how Jesus did this. Instead of just healing the man where he is by laying his hands on the man or speaking—as he's done at other times—he takes the man aside, puts his fingers into the man's ears, spits and touches his tongue, looks up to heaven, and declares, "Be opened." Why?

I think it's because this is how he knew he could communicate with this man in his disabled state. I mean, Jesus could've laid his hands on the man or said, "Be healed," but the man wouldn't have heard him and may not have known what he was doing by laying his hands on him. But as Jesus pulls the man aside, he shows that this man is the object of his attention, and he's going to address him personally. By putting his fingers in his ears and removing them, he's communicating to a man who can't hear that he's going to open his ears. Spit in the ancient world was sometimes seen as a means of healing. And so, by spitting and then touching the man's tongue, he's communicating that he's going to heal his tongue, loosening it so that he can speak. By looking up to heaven, he's showing that what he's about to do is the work of God. Do you see how intimately and particularly he's caring for this man and meeting his needs?

The God who created this entire cosmos, will one day make it all new, and will call to himself a people from every part of the planet, is able to care for you intimately and particularly. He knows the particular circumstances of your life, is able to give you every gift you need, and will withhold from you everything he knows wouldn't be good for you. He knows you inside and out, and he'll deal with you in particular ways that he may not deal with another. So don't fret if your life looks different from another. He knows your particular needs. Don't fret, thinking he can't care for you because of all kinds of oddities in your life. He knows precisely how he can care for you, meeting your particular needs, just as he accommodated everything to this man who couldn't hear or speak.

Our great God is great enough that he calls out all the stars in space by name and upholds this universe by the word of his power. But he also is focused on you, knows your name, loves you particularly, and is shaping your life—in all its particular details—to conform you to the image of his Son. And one day, as he makes all things new fully and finally, he'll fashion you a resurrection body just like he knows you need. Our God is great, and he is good. And if you need a reminder of that, just remember that the God who made this world and will make it anew demonstrated his love for you by living, dying, and being raised for your redemption. May he be praised in our faithful obedience even now as we come to the table. Amen.