

Mark Chapter 7 : v. 24 – Chapter 8: v. 10.**Title: Jesus is also the rescuer of the Gentiles!!!**

²⁴ From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know *it*, but He could not be hidden. ²⁵ For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. ²⁶ The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷ But Jesus said to her, “Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.” ²⁸ And she answered and said to Him, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.” ²⁹ Then He said to her, “For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.” ³⁰ And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed. ³¹ Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. ³² Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. ³³ And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴ Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” ³⁵ Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶ Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed *it*. ³⁷ And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples *to Him* and said to them, ² “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. ³ And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.” ⁴ Then His disciples answered Him, “How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?” ⁵ He asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven.” ⁶ So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples to set before *them*; and they set *them* before the multitude. ⁷ They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before *them*. ⁸ So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. ⁹ Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away, ¹⁰ immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha.

Introduction

The parable of the sower in Mark chapter 4 introduced us to the necessity of understanding the identity and teaching of Jesus.

(Mark 4: v. 11-13)

Jesus made it clear in these verses that careful listening would result in further revelation about Himself. However, if there was a deliberate rejection about the teaching of Jesus then it would result in judgement. (4: v. 24-25)

The Pharisees, that is the Jewish religious leaders, have deliberately rejected the message of Jesus. (3: v. 6) In Chapter 7: v. 1-23 that we covered last month, Jesus indicated that the problem with the Pharisees was a sinful heart.

The way in which Jesus describes the problem of the Pharisees makes it obvious that it was not just a problem for them, it was a universal human problem. (7: v. 21-23)

The disciples however still have a problem understanding the message of Jesus. (7: v.18)

Perhaps we are left asking the question **“Is it possible for the sinful human heart to be changed?”**

How will it happen?

What will it take for anyone to understand who Jesus is?

In Chapter 7: v. 24 – 8: v.10 we begin to get an answer to these questions.

Before we come to the text I want to remind you that last month Jesus quoted from the prophet Isaiah.

(Mark 7: v. 6-7)

⁶ He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with *their* lips,
But their heart is far from Me.
⁷ And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.’

If we go back into the Old Testament and read **Isaiah Chapter 29: v. 14-20**, we will see that this section of Mark fits perfectly into the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy.

Isaiah Chapter 29: v. 14-20. (N.K.J.)

¹⁴ Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work
Among this people,
A marvelous work and a wonder;
For the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish,
And the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hidden.”

¹⁵ Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD,
And their works are in the dark;
They say, “Who sees us?” and, “Who knows us?”

¹⁶ Surely you have things turned around!
Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay;
For shall the thing made say of him who made it,
“He did not make me”?
Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it,
“He has no understanding”?

¹⁷ Is it not yet a very little while
Till Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field,
And the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest?

¹⁸ In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book,
And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.

¹⁹ The humble also shall increase *their* joy in the LORD,
And the poor among men shall rejoice
In the Holy One of Israel.

²⁰ For the terrible one is brought to nothing,
The scornful one is consumed,
And all who watch for iniquity are cut off—

Everything that Isaiah says in his verses is fulfilled by Jesus here in these verses.

So let us now move into the text and try and discover what God wants to teach us today before our celebration of Communion.

In Chapter 7: v. 24- through to chapter 8: v.10 we have 3 miracles performed by Jesus in a “Gentile Area”.

Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah chapter 49: v. 5-6 that the “Messiah” would bring light to the Gentiles.

Isaiah 49: v. 5-6 here.

⁵ “And now the LORD says,
Who formed Me from the womb *to be* His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him,
So that Israel is gathered to Him
(For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,
And My God shall be My strength),

⁶ Indeed He says,

'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,
That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'

What we need to remember as we exegete these verses is that by Jesus entering into a "Gentile" area He was doing a very radical thing.

We also must bear in mind that Jesus is teaching the disciples something in these miracles.

Jesus is not ministering to the Gentiles purposefully. That comes later through Paul in the book of Acts.

It was hard for the disciples to understand what Jesus was doing in the wrong area.

The disciples couldn't work out what Jesus was trying to achieve.

The answer for the disciple's confusion could be found in the Old Testament Scriptures.

It can be the same for us in our lives too.

When Jesus does something in our life, or allows something to happen in our life which we find hard or confusing, we need to realise that Jesus is trying to teach us something.

It may be about ourselves, or it may be about trusting Jesus in that situation.

Jesus never wastes experiences in our lives and if we are open and humble, Jesus will always be teaching us new things and drawing us to new heights of faith and trust in Him.

Before us in these verses we have 3 miracles.

1. The faith of a Gentile Woman – 7: v. 24-30.
2. A deaf person is healed – 7 v. 31-37.
3. Jesus feeds 4,000 men with 7 loaves of bread. – 8: v. 1-10.

1. The Faith of a Gentile Woman – 7: v. 24-30.

A Gentile woman meets up with Jesus and she keeps asking Jesus to cast out a demon from her daughter.

The reply that Jesus gave the woman seems strange to us.

It was a type of parable with a hidden meaning.

It actually seems like a rebuke to the woman.

It appears that Jesus wasn't going to cast the demon out of the woman's daughter.

However, the reply that the woman gave Jesus clearly indicates that she understood what Jesus was talking about.

In v. 29 Jesus commended her understanding and as a result of that Jesus cast the demon out of her daughter.

To fully understand this miracle we need to turn to the parallel passage in Matthew Chapter 15: v. 21-28

²¹ Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." ²³ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." ²⁴ But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" ²⁶ But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." ²⁷ And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

From the Matthew passage it is made clear to us that Jesus was sent firstly to the house of Israel.

This is why Jesus appeared to reject the woman.

However, Jesus was in a Gentile area.

The woman somehow knew what Jesus was talking about.

In a Jewish household, the adults were fed first, then the children and then the dogs.

What the woman discerned from Jesus was that the dogs eventually got fed.

This is why she didn't give up on asking Jesus.

The other reason why the woman kept talking with Jesus was the way in which He spoke to her.

In those days, the word “dog” was a Jewish term for “Gentiles”.

Dogs at this time were not animals that people usually kept as pets.

Normally when a Jewish person used the word “dog” for a Gentile it was an insult.

Q. So why did Jesus use this word?

The answer is found if we go back to the original Greek language into which the Hebrew was first translated.

Here Jesus doesn’t use the usual word for ‘dog’.

Jesus uses a word that would describe a very friendly and affectionate dog.

Although Jesus still used the word dog, He said it in such a way that made the woman perceive that He loved her.

The woman had such great faith in Jesus that she was content with whatever Jesus could do for her.

Remember that the woman wasn’t appealing for her own comfort, she was crying out to Jesus on behalf of her daughter.

What is the Spiritual Lesson from the miracle?

In the account of this miracle in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus could have commended lots of things concerning this woman.

He could have commended her wisdom, or her perseverance, but Jesus commended her “faith”.

It was her “faith” in Jesus and His ability to perform the miracle that was rewarded by Jesus.

It is the same for us today.

If it is God’s will for a miracle to happen in our lives, **then we will need to obtain it by “faith” in the Lord Jesus.**

The Bible tells us in 2 Peter 3: v. 9 that God is longsuffering towards us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

It is not God’s will that any should perish but that everybody should come to obtain eternal life through Jesus.

So we know that eternal Salvation is the will of God, for all people.

However, in order to obtain that Salvation, we need to come to Jesus and put our “faith” in Him.

We need to really believe that Jesus is God in human form and has already come into this world and secured our Salvation, by dying a substitutionary death on a cross, 2,000 years ago.

God knows our heart and He knows when our faith in Him is serious.

God can perform a miracle in our life if it is His will to do so.

We know that it is always God’s will to save us from our sin, if we cry to Him on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus.

However, when it comes to personal miracles concerning our health or similar situation, we can ask in faith, but we must believe in the sovereign will of God, when we receive the answer.

2. The second miracle towards a Gentile person was the healing of a “Deaf Person”. – Chapter 7: v. 31-37.

Isaiah 35: v. 4-6.

⁴ Say to those *who are* fearful-hearted,
“Be strong, do not fear!
Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance,
With the recompense of God;
He will come and save you.”

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

⁶ Then the lame shall leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the dumb sing.
For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness,
And streams in the desert.

Mark wants us to make a direct connection between this incident and the prophecy from Isaiah 35: v. 4-6.
Mark wants his readers to notice that this incident is more proof that Jesus is the promised Messiah.
First of all, we need to note the man's condition.

We are told that the man was deaf and had a speech impediment.

If the man had been deaf from birth, he would not have known how to speak.

Therefore, it was either a disease or an accident that had taken away his hearing.

This would have left the man with the memory of speech but not with the ability to speak clearly.

This condition would have made it worse for this man.

The man no doubt spoke some words but people couldn't understand those words.

To most people except his family and close friends, this man would not have been treated with compassion.

In v. 33 we are told that Jesus took the man away from the crowd.

Jesus didn't want a public display of his healing, He wanted it done in private.

Jesus knew that this man was rejected by most people, but he was NOT rejected by Jesus.

In this miracle Jesus did a strange thing.

He put his fingers in the man's ears, spat and touched the man's tongue.

Although it was the faith of the deaf man's friend who brought him to Jesus, Jesus wanted the deaf man to know what was going on in this miracle.

Jesus wanted to involve the deaf man. Therefore, He communicated through touch.

Jesus made it clear that He was about to heal his hearing and his speech.

Jesus looked up to Heaven, presumably to ask for God's power, and immediately the man's ears were opened and he could speak normally.

This confirmed the fact that the man's deafness happened later on in his life.

Application here

The key to applying this miracle to our lives here today is to notice the response of the people who witnessed the miracle.

v. 37

³⁷ And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

The people recognised that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah.

Their conviction about Jesus was so strong that they could not stop telling other people about Jesus the Messiah.

We may not have experienced the same miracle as the man in Mark's gospel, but if we know and love Jesus, then we have experienced a greater miracle.

The greatest miracle is meeting Jesus the Messiah and having your sins forgiven.

The greatest healing is "Spiritual Healing".

The New Testament describes this experience as coming from death to life and from darkness to light.

When you truly become a believer in Jesus and experience the "New Birth" you cannot help but to share that with others.

May God help us to be as enthusiastic as the crowd on that day.

3. The third miracle is 4,000 men being fed with 7 loaves of bread – Chapter 8: v. 1-10.

The first thing that I want to say about this miracle is that it is definitely a different miracle than the miracle of the feeding of 5,000 people in chapter 6.

There are lots of differences but the main one is the context of the situation.

In the first miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 in Mark 6: v. 30-44, we have lots of hungry day trippers, who although hungry, had only missed perhaps one meal.

Notice in Chapter 8: v.2 that the crowd of 4,000 had been with Jesus for 3 days and had nothing to eat.

This crowd was different from the first one.

This crowd was not just following Jesus for the physical benefits they could receive through the food, they were really interested in the teaching of Jesus.

(Matt. 6: v. 33)

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

This crowd was definitely seeking first God's Kingdom and His righteousness and Jesus definitely provided for them.

In v. 3 Jesus said " ...if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way, for some of them have come from a far."

I believe that the truth in this miracle is about Jesus feeding real hungry Gentiles with both physical and spiritual food.

Psalm 34: v. 10 says "The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing."

Sometimes we have to wait until the last moment in order to receive God's provision for something, but we can be sure of the compassion of Jesus for us at those times.

We live in a real world, with real problems, we don't escape the challenges of life.

However, Jesus is with us in those problems and in those situations.

Jesus wants us to trust in Him, firstly for "Spiritual Food" and secondly to have our temporal needs met.

Jesus knows our need, even before we ask Him.

We can trust the person who surrendered His life and died on a cruel cross, that we should be set free from the penalty of our sins.

Jesus did a REAL thing, 2,000 years ago in history, so that today, we might celebrate this wonderful act of personal sacrifice for each one of us.

As the great Hymn writer Charles Wesley said "**Amazing love, how can it be that thou my God should die for Me.?"**

As we celebrate "Communion" today, may our hearts echo the words of Charles Wesley?