

Sermon Theme: He Heals with One Word

Read Mark 7:31-37

What's the magic word? You can't enter this secret club unless you have the magic word. You can't have cake and ice cream unless you say the magic word. Perhaps you've heard these conditions said to you as a child? Being a child was a simple time. It was a time where you could in most cases say one word to get what you wanted, such as "please" to get dessert or "open sesame" to be let into your friend's secret club. If only it were that easy today. If only you could say one word to fix everything. If only you could look at your bills and say, "paid" and it is done. If only you could look at the house and say, "clean" and it is done. If only you could look at the crop and say, "harvest" and it is done. If only one word could fix everything...alas, in our lives, that is not how things work. You have to work and work well to get things done in this earth. This world requires toilsome and painful work. It did since the fall into sin. Adam couldn't say to the fields, "yield" and it be done. He had to work the land, perhaps injuring and blistering himself in the heat and thorns. And after a long day at this, he had to come back home to lead a household, and a broken one at that with a murderous Cain and dead Abel. And Eve, the one who toiled in pain to bear these children into the world only to watch them fight and bicker and in the end have one become a fugitive and the other having his blood crying out to God in death. If only one word could cure this! And as Adam and Eve looked on

their new son Seth, they perhaps remembered what God said to them after the fall into sin, that there would be one who would come who could get things done and done well with one word. This one would be their Savior! He would say to the deaf “Ephatha” be opened, and it would be done and done well. He would say to the young, dead girl, “arise,” and she would. He would say to Lazarus, who had been in the grave three days, “come forth,” and he would. He would say one word on the cross of calvary, “Tetelesthai” which is Greek for, “It is finished.” And thus, with one word would heal our greatest ill: sin. Jesus did it. He proclaimed it. With a word He heals, not only the symptoms of your sinfulness, but the root, sin itself, by Himself. Therefore, with a word He heals. With a Word He does all things well.

(We Pray...)

Let’s now dwell on this One Word Healer, Jesus Christ and His journey through Palestine. Jesus had just come from the region of Tyre and Sidon after having just healed a Gentile woman’s daughter of demon possession. Now He returns to the region of the Decapolis, which was a region of ten cities with a primarily Greek population. The Decapolis didn’t have much acquaintance with Jesus and His miracles except for the healing of the demoniac, a man with a thousand or more demons inside Him. There it was that Jesus cast out the legion from the man into the herd of swine. The people would have remembered this for that was a huge financial loss for them because all their herd were led by the demons off a cliff to their demise. They also perhaps remember this miracle because there was no longer a

supernaturally powered man wailing and screaming and breaking chains.

Regardless of this controversial episode among the people, a crowd of people in the Decapolis saw Jesus, the One who spoke very little words to drive out the hordes of hell from a man. This group of Gentiles was obviously aware of Jesus' power to heal. So then, considering the cases of Jesus' healings, they brought their case before Jesus. These people, having compassion for their friend and or relative, and having limited knowledge that Jesus had the power to heal, took the opportunity. They presented to Jesus a deaf-mute man. The deaf mute man could not hear at all. On top of that, He couldn't speak clearly. He wasn't completely mute, but perhaps after being deaf for so long, this in turn impacted his speech. Hearing nothing, with a tongue stiff as a brick, this man had a rough life. If only there was one word that could fix his ailments!

To picture his ailments, imagine being deaf yourself and not being able to communicate clearly by speaking. You grunt, moan, and make guttural noises only to have your neighbors and family guess at what you are trying to communicate. And, because of deafness, you need blatant gestures to show you what to do or what is being communicated. This account happened well before ASL, and this was a poor region too where it was doubtful that the people had sign language of any kind, and if they did, it wasn't taught to the poor. It was a fend for yourself sort of place. By God's grace was this man still alive and that he could still see. He would be able to see what was about to happen. But oh, how the devil afflicts mankind with such

horrendous ailments. In Jesus' day, Satan sent a myriad of demons into one man. He sent another into a poor girl. And here he took a man's communication system away, leaving him with no way to hear or speak. This meant no way to hear the Word of God, and no way to confess it. And though the man could still see, books were also extremely hard to find, and those on the Old Testament Scriptures were on the other side of the sea of Galilee, the Jewish side. And on top of that, had he ever been taught to read, let alone Aramaic? This man seemed doomed from the start. If only there was one word that could fix this! So, the people bring the man to Jesus that He may lay His hand on Him.

Perhaps you know of someone who has it as rough as this deaf-mute. If only there was one word to fix all this torment! In our day and age, God has blessed us with modern developments such as ASL, teaching methods for the disabled, surgical means when the patient qualifies, and so on, and yet Satan still deals mighty blows to people, giving them rough lives. He wants to take away any possibility for people to believe. And as he is prevented by God and His angels, Satan has not muted or deafened you, but man has he afflicted you. How many pains has he caused you? Oh, how he wishes you would just give up on the one-word healing thing! Satan perhaps is thinking, "Come on! How can you still hold on? All those trips to the hospital! I don't know if the one-word healer wants to help you" or "How's that family of yours doing? Tsk Tsk, they aren't what they're cracked up to be, aren't they. Is that one word healer really helping?" or "Aren't you a little old to still be working,

and if not, how can you work in these conditions? Shouldn't the one-word healer have said His one word by now?" Satan will try to drive you down. Oh, how he wishes he could make you deaf and mute physically, but he can't. For now, he wants to make you deaf and mute spiritually. He wants you to give up on God. He wants your ears to be deaf to God's word, and your mouth mute or else impeded, no longer wishing to say the name God or Jesus anymore.

It's a tough world. It will batter and bruise us, and yet we are reminded from the One Word of our one-word healer. Let's turn back to Scripture to see what happens with Him and the deaf-mute. Jesus takes the crowd up on their request, though He takes the deaf-mute aside from the crowd. How else could He get the man's attention. He needed gestures, so He pulled the man aside. He literally grabbed the man away to grab His attention. Picture again from the man's perspective. The crowd of friends dragged you to a Jewish man and his twelve companions. You have no idea what is going on. The Jewish man, Jesus, pulls you to the side. It is just you and Him, but you have no idea that you are staring into the face of the incarnate son of God. And you would never know if you never had the word heard. How then could this man know unless He could hear the Word?

The man looks at Jesus and within his deafened silence experiences Jesus touching the man's ears and tongue and then sees Him spit, as if to say to the deaf-mute, "I am going to heal you." And Jesus after grabbing the man and getting His attention, looks to Heaven with deep sigh, for this ailment pains Him. Jesus' ministry, His visitation is just endless amounts of

running into Satan's darkness and its ill effects. It hurts Christ to see it, and yet He came to take it away. He came to be the glory of Israel and the light to the Gentiles. He came to show that He was the Messiah. He came to heal sins ills, and He came to treat the cause, not just the symptom. Jesus would destroy sin on the cross. He would crush Satan and His ways. And knowing His purpose, think then of the impact this has on all of you. Yes, the hospital visits are tough. Yes, the family may not be where you want them to be. Yes, the work and toil you endure is annoying and endless. Sin has permeated your life and makes things hard, but you now know about the Messiah. The word has told you about Him. With one word Jesus said, "it is finished." What is finished? You have been redeemed. The sin that plagues you, the sin within you that causes you to sin, the sin that deserves eternal death in hell, that sin has been paid for. Jesus has offered Himself on the cross for this purpose. Now when this world ends, when the hospital visits, family disappointments, and toilsome employments are said and done, you will not be staring into an expanse of pain and suffering, but rather healing, for Jesus has healed you of the cause of sinfulness. He has taken away your sin and its guilt.

Therefore, He has destroyed the root of your problems. The symptoms may still be plaguing you, but you have the assurance that the symptoms will be healed at Judgment Day. They will be taken away at the end of time. The Word of God assures you of that, for in it we see a preview of our final healing displayed by Jesus' healing of the deaf-mute.

And so, continuing with the healing preview, Jesus looked to Heaven. He knew what was coming. He knew His Father's will. He knew that one day He would bear this deaf-mute man's and all people's sin on the cross, including yours and mine. He knew what He came to fix. And so, in His glorious preview, what did He do? He spoke one word, saying, "Ephatha." This means "be opened." The deaf man then could hear, and His speech impediment, his stiff tongue was loosened. He could now hear and speak! Jesus did it! He healed the man with one word. And should this surprise us? At the beginning, God spoke, and it was so. Everything came into being at His speaking of words. He spoke His word and created all things. And Here Jesus, God incarnate, speaks for the man's ears and tongue to be opened. Jesus made this man, and now He fixes Him. He healed Him with a word—Ephatha. He healed Him with His Word.

And so, what about us? He made us, and yet we have all these ailments. Why doesn't He just say to your body, "be healed." Or to your family "Be reconciled." Or to your work life, "Be still and complete?" Why doesn't He say, "Ephatha" to you? Well, He did, didn't He? When you were baptized, washed with water and the Word, He gave you His Holy Spirit and said, "Ephatha." Your heart was opened. Your faith created. Your deaf-mute heart was healed, and Jesus keeps it healed with the same word. Though Satan tries to close your ears and mouth, Christ does not allow it, giving you His One Word to heal you every day of your sins. He heals all with His word spiritually, and He will heal all of us at the end of days by fulfilling His Word of promise given. He will take your sorrows away on that

day, saying to the doors of Heaven, “be opened,” that you may never have to deal with those pains again.

And so, to conclude, let’s go back to the account, Jesus then brought the healed man back to his friends, and He told them not to tell anyone. Why? It wasn’t time yet. The people of the Decapolis had no idea of the real purpose of Jesus’ ministry on earth. They didn’t know yet that Jesus’ purpose wasn’t only to cure sin’s effects but sin itself. The people didn’t realize that. That day will come, but for now Jesus essentially says, “Keep quiet and don’t tell anyone else.” Another reason Jesus gives this charge is that He needed rest. He was swamped. He needed rest. He was tired out each day on earth after working with the pains of the physically ill, the broken family, and the overworked. He was tired out after feeling all these things Himself. Yes, Jesus experienced similar hardships to us: Physical pain--nail pierced hands, Family pains—Judas’ betrayal, and work pains--the overloaded days of feeding thousands, correcting sinners, and rebuking liars. Jesus knew it all. He’s been there, and yet He came out on top. Jesus could have fixed all his plights with one word, but He didn’t. He endured it all for those who can’t fix things with one word: you and me. The empathetic Savior did that in your place perfectly and then healed you by His death and resurrection.

And so, in this endeavor, Jesus would not get His rest. The more Jesus told them not to talk, the more they did it anyway. They told the whole Decapolis region! This spread, and the people said, “He has done all things well! He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.” This account showed them the

wonderful and beautiful compassion of the Savior. It showed them the nature of His work. It made them rethink the healing of the demoniac. That was not a bad thing, but a very good thing! And soon, Jesus would be feeding 4000+ with His power in this Decapolis region. “He has done all things well!” Such beautiful words from this uninformed crowd of Gentiles. He has certainly done all things well. He lived a perfect life in your place while enduring the same trials as you, He healed you on the cross, He opened your ears and hearts through the Word and Sacraments, and He will with one word heal you of all your pains at Judgment Day where He will say to the gates of Heaven, “Ephatha,” opening for you the doors of everlasting life. Amen.