

TEXT: Mark 7:31-37

THEME: CHRIST HAS DONE EVERYTHING WELL

- A. Friends Bring Friends to Jesus
- B. Jesus Goes Out of His Way for Sinners

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

You almost have to wonder if the man even understood where his friends were taking him or why. If they spoke an explanation, he didn't hear it, and if he asked questions, they couldn't understand him.

But these were true friends, so they brought the man to see someone they had heard about—a miracle worker from the other side of the Sea of Galilee—someone they had heard could heal the sick. They brought their friend because he had a problem that none of them could solve. They brought him because they cared.

And when they brought him to Jesus, they weren't satisfied simply to point out the man's need and wait to see what would happen. They begged Jesus to heal their friend with a touch. They had heard what his touch could do.

Did these people know that Jesus was the Messiah? Did they recognize him as the Son of God? Did they put their trust in him for the forgiveness of their sins and eternal life in heaven? Not likely—at least not before the miracle. They were Gentiles—and very likely pagans. But they had heard that Jesus had power, and they begged him to use it on their friend.

How about us? Do we who know Jesus as the Messiah—the Christ, our Savior—recognize him as the Son of God and trust in him alone for forgiveness? Do we care that much for our friends? Do we bring them to Jesus for healing? As we learn from our text today, FRIENDS BRING FRIENDS TO JESUS.

Jesus won't turn them away, just as he didn't turn this deaf man away. In fact, he cares for your friends even more than you do. He may just be waiting for you to bring them to him and ask him to take them out of unbelief and into the family of God, to heal them of their diseases and infirmities, or to bind up their broken hearts.

How do we bring our friends—and family members, neighbors, colleagues, and classmates—to Jesus? We can introduce an unbelieving acquaintance or a burdened brother or sister to Christ by bringing them with us to worship on our annual Festival of Friendship, October 28 and 29. This year's theme is NFL: New Found Life—Pass It On. We can share our Savior by participating in the Living Christmas Card, which is planned for December 1st and 2nd. We can introduce them to our Savior through the pages of God's Word or just by sharing the good news that we have learned. And we can ask—even beg—for the healing of our friends' hearts and bodies in earnest prayer to CHRIST, WHO HAS DONE EVERYTHING WELL.

Let's look again at what Jesus did so well in our text for today. **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!").

It's a can't-see-the-forest-for-the-trees sort of thing. Scholars and Bible students get so caught up in trying to figure out the meaning of each of Christ's actions in healing this man that they lose sight of the miracle and the truths it teaches us. Some even make the mistake of thinking that Jesus had to use a more involved method because this was a "hard case" whom Jesus somehow couldn't heal with just a word or touch.

We know that wasn't true, of course. The Lord who raised the dead and stilled the storm with just a word would never find a healing hard. So what was the reason for the fingers and the spit and the touch and the sigh?

The simple answer is that this was what this man needed at this point in time. He was deaf and could hardly speak. There wouldn't have been much sense in Jesus asking him if he wanted to be healed or even telling him what he was going to do. So, the healer, Jesus, used a sort of sign language to make clear what he was doing and why. He "opened up" the man's ears and "lubricated" his tongue, and then, looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, he signaled that the healing power about to flow from him came from heaven. These actions spoke louder than any words. You can imagine the excitement the man must have felt once he realized what Jesus was about to do.

The Son of God didn't have to do any of these special things. He was a busy man, but he took the time and went out of his way to help this needy Gentile—because that's the way Christ does things. That's the love of God in action. **JESUS GOES OUT OF HIS WAY FOR SINNERS.** God goes out of his way to communicate his grace to sinners.

That's what he has done and still does for you and me. He revealed his gospel, his good news, of full and free forgiveness of our sins and eternal life in heaven in the Bible. He made that gospel, that good news, tangible, touchable for us also through the water of Baptism. And regularly, from his servants' hands, he performs the miracle of the Lord's Supper—Christ's very body and blood given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins, the strengthening of your saving faith, and the promise of heaven.

Then, he made sure that you heard that good news from your parents, from a pastor or teacher, from a friend or co-worker, from your spouse, or maybe from your own son or daughter. Then, the Holy Spirit worked saving faith in your heart through that gospel, that good news. And now you are here to listen to that good news once again through the Word, and to receive that good news inside you through the Lord's Supper. Whatever your troubles—your deafness—may be, whatever your inabilities—you difficulty speaking—may be, God still communicates his grace—his forgiving and empowering love—just the way we sinners need it.

Read and meditate on Christ and what he has done for you. It will never get old, and the truth and wonder of God's amazing grace in Christ will regularly refresh and surprise you. We have an amazing Savior—**CHRIST, WHO HAS DONE EVERYTHING WELL.** Amen.