



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Mark 7:24-37

Mark 7

"He Has Done All Things Well"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The passage is Mark chapter 7, and so if you've got your Bibles turned to it and follow along with me as I read verses 24 through 37.

And from there He arose and went away to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice. But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And He was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs." And He said to her, "Because of this answer go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having departed. And again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. And he went and they brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they entreated Him to lay His hand upon him. And He took him aside from the multitude, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva; and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to

him, "Ephphatha!" (that is, "Be opened!") And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly. And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. And they were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak."

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow now in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for the privilege we have again to come together and to open the Scriptures and to study them and to look into the miracles that our Lord performed, and we are reminded in that of the power, the grace, the mercy that is His and that He bestows upon us. We may not see it in the same ways, Father, as they did in that day, but it is the same power and with the same compassion and concern your Son works on our behalf, obtaining your mercy that He applies to us through your Holy Spirit. We thank you for the triune God that is merciful and gracious and powerful and working all things together for our good.

We thank you for that fact, and in light of that fact, that we can come before you, before the throne of grace, with the requests that we have for ourselves, for this assembly, for our friends, and know that in that mercy and in that grace, you hear us and you answer us in your time according to your wisdom, and we pray for various individuals that are listed on the calendar of concern. We pray for Jim Dean. We ask that you would give him mercy, grace, and strengthen him and encourage him. Pray for Kim Ryan, that you'd bless her with continued recovery from surgery she has undergone and pray for Bob Messick, that you would give mercy and grace to him and bring healing into his life. We just pray for so many of these people, Lord, whose names are listed here and those who aren't.

Without listing them individually, you know them, Father, and we intercede on their behalf and we pray for those who are in need

financially, those who are discouraged, those who seem to be without hope. We know that there's no reason to be without hope. We are weak and we fail in that regard, Father, but you've given us promises that are true. And help all of us to remember those promises and to reflect upon them and gain the kind of comfort that we should have from a God who is intimately involved in all of the details of our life and working things out to our good. Bless and encourage those who need that encouragement and make provision for those who are in need of it.

We thank you, Father, for the blessings that we can give thanks for. We think of the children that have been born to the Steinbacks and the Farragos. We praise you for that, pray that those children would grow in a healthy way and that they would be blessed by the grace of your salvation. Bless their parents in raising them, pray that for the children throughout this church and we pray that you'd bless their parents as they instruct them. Bless their Sunday school teachers as they instruct them. Open their young hearts to the truth and give them faith and build them up in that faith. And bless us who are older with that. Bless us this morning as we look into the Scriptures. Guide and direct us and encourage us and teach us. Build us up in the faith and prepare us for the week ahead, we pray, and we pray these things in our Savior's name. Amen.

[Message] I want to begin our study this morning at the end with the praise that is given to the Lord in verse 37 when the people say of Him He has done all things well. A truer statement has never been made. Everything that our Lord did, He did well, and that can be said of no other man absolutely. Oh, it's true that we often say of one another in our compliments, "Well done" or "You did a good job" and we mean it, usually. But it's only true in a relative sense, not in the absolute sense, and I think we have an illustration of that point later on in the book of Mark in chapter 10. You remember that scene when the rich young ruler approaches the Lord, and as he does so, he

addresses Him as "good teacher." Seems like an appropriate way to speak to the Lord considering all of the good things that He had done and the good things that He had said.

And yet the Lord responds with a rather surprising answer. He says, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." Meaning only God is good in the absolute sense. Only God is perfect, and that's true here with this statement that is made of our Lord, that He has done all things well. He has done all things well in the absolute sense, and in that sense only it can be said of Him because only He is perfect. The best that we can do when we do things well, the best that we can do is taint it with sin. But our Lord, unlike us, He lived a flawless life, a life without sin in motive or in conduct. He did all things well. When he entered the carpentry shop to learn His trade as a boy, He gave His full attention to that effort. When He entered the synagogue to study the Scriptures, He gave it His full attention, studied to His full potential. He used His time well and as a man in His human nature, He grew in His wisdom.

He did all things well, and everything that He did – and we see that in a special sense, I think, in the way that He conducted His relationships with people. No man could relate to people as our Lord did. That becomes particularly evident as we observe the various ways in which He made contact with people. He could relate to everybody differently according to their personality, according to their particular need. He had the unique ability to put His finger upon the problem of everyone that he encountered, and having done that, show them their sin and show them their need and lead them to the solution. And He did that very well.

Compare how He dealt, for example, with Nicodemus in chapter 3 of John's gospel and then compare that with the woman of Samaria in chapter 4. Totally different people, one a male, the other a female; one a Jew, the other a Samaritan; one a moral man, the teacher of Israel, as our Lord describes him, and the other an immoral

woman living with a man not her husband. Different people, different situations, different problems, we might say, and He approaches them differently, with different methods, but He showed an equal interest in both with the same goal, and that to create faith in them and cause it to grow.

And He does the same with us today, and that's really the chief point that I want to make this morning. He deals with each of us individually. He deals with us in different ways, with different methods, as our need requires and as His wisdom demands, that we might grow in our understanding and in our faith, that we might become more like Him and as a result, someday receive the greatest accolade, the greatest word of praise that one can receive, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

We see in this passage that men say of Him "well done" and yet through Him, there is that possibility, that great potential, that we as His servants will hear the same thing from our Lord someday as we stand before Him. Now, we may not understand all of the ways in which He deals with us, why He deals with us in the way that He does at certain periods in our life. He deals with us differently at different times. Why trials come the way they do, why when we pray to Him oftentimes we don't receive the answer that we're looking for, the answer that we might expect. But we can rest in this fact, which is borne out by the passage that we study this morning, and that is that in His relationship with us, He does all things well and so we can trust in Him. And with that confidence, we can draw close to Him.

We see that this morning in the verses that we want to take a look at. The Lord was in the midst of a very busy ministry. He and his disciples had been trying to break away for a rest and yet found that rest eluded them. You remember in the past chapters that we have looked at, they went to Bethsaida on the northern rim of the Sea of Galilee to get some rest, but the crowds followed them and they had to minister to them there, and then they crossed back across the

sea to Gennesaret on the western shore of the lake. But when they disembarked, immediately the people recognized them, the crowds formed and everywhere they went, the people came for healing.

When He wasn't healing or teaching, He was debating.

In chapter 7, a group of distinguished religious leaders came up from Jerusalem and criticized Him for not enforcing their traditions of hand-washing on His disciples, and there followed a discussion of clean and unclean things in which the Lord exposed their error, called them hypocrites, and then explained to them that what is important is the Word of God, not the traditions of men. What pleases God is not clean hands but a clean heart and faith in Him.

Now we come to our passage in verse 24: "And still in need of rest, He and His disciples left that place and went away to the region of Tyre." This was Gentile territory and this is the only excursion that our Lord made beyond the ancient borders of Israel, and He goes into a pagan land located in modern-day Lebanon on the Mediterranean coast, a place where He would hardly be known. Jews had very little dealings with the Gentiles. They tried to have no dealings with them. They were considered unclean people, and so He went there presumably with the prospect of getting out of the public eye and enjoying some privacy. But again, it was not to be. Verse 24 states he could not escape notice. Tyre is about 40 miles northwest of Capernaum, our Lord's home base. We think that that would be out of range, particularly the kind of place that it was, being Gentile and being pagan, but His reputation preceded Him even into that pagan land.

And there, a woman approached Him who was not Jewish and Mark emphasizes that. Says of her, describing her in verse 26, that she was a Gentile, literally, in the Greek text, a Greek of the Syrophenician race. Syrophenician because Phoenicia on the Lebanese coast, that region of the Middle East, the Near East of that day, was part of the province of Syria, so it's Syrophenician.

Matthew describes her as a Canaanite woman. So altogether, we should take this description probably in this sense, that she spoke Greek, she was a Syrian in nationality, and she was a Canaanite in race. In every way, she was different from the Jews. She was a descendant of Israel's ancient enemy. She was a Canaanite and yet she comes to Israel's Messiah, seeking mercy and blessing, and she was desperate.

We read of this, verse 25 where Mark writes that her little daughter had an unclean spirit. Matthew is a little more vivid in his description of that. He writes that she was cruelly demon possessed and you can imagine what he meant by that and the condition of this young child as you read through the gospel accounts and find the various accounts of demon possession and what would occur, how sometimes it was accompanied by convulsions involving physical injury as the victim would fall helplessly to the floor, perhaps striking an object. In one case, we read of rolling into fire. And this child was cruelly demon possessed. So when her mother heard that Jesus had entered that region, their region, immediately she came and fell at His feet and kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

She kept asking and she kept asking because the Lord wouldn't answer her request. She falls at His feet, He's silent, and evidently He walked away from her because Matthew writes that she was shouting out after them. She was persistent in her request of mercy from the Lord, so persistent that she began to annoy the disciples to the point where they were asking Jesus to send her away. "Just heal her, get rid of her, we're trying to have our vacation, finally get to the coast, we've got the beach here, and this woman is coming after us, shouting and beginning to really disturb us." But He wouldn't send her away and she wouldn't go away. There's a beautiful picture in that of persistent, earnest prayer. Prayer that doesn't cease because it doesn't receive an immediate answer.

Her love for her child was too great for her to stop. Her faith was too strong for her to cease. She knew that Christ was the only answer to her need. She'd heard the reports coming out of Galilee of what He was doing, that He was destroying the works of the devil. She knew that only He could bind the strong man that was binding her daughter and she knew from what He was doing that He was willing to do that, that He would not tolerate the cruel work of Satan, and so she knew that He was willing to do that, that that was within the Will of the Lord because He was doing it. And so she came to Him and she prayed – because that's really what this is, it's a prayer that's face-to-face, unlike the prayers that we pray.

Our prayers may seem one-sided and conversations of one way, so to speak, but they're the same thing. The Lord is just as much present with us and our prayers are just as audible to Him as this woman's requests were, and so what she's doing in effect is praying, and praying intelligently, praying according to His Will, and being persistent in it. Persistent prayer but all she got from Him was silence. And there's perhaps nothing of a greater trial to us – at least one of the greatest trials that we experience – than that of the silence of God when one is in great anguish of soul and seeking the Lord's help, and those prayers seem to be received with silence. That's what she received. After persistent prayer, silence. Finally, in verse 27, the Lord responds to her pleas. But not the way that we might have expected.

Here's a woman in terrible anguish, but rather than answer her with sympathy and help, He answers with a parable about children and dogs intended to show the great difference between Israel and the Gentiles. We read in verse 27 that He was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." In the East, dogs were pariahs. They were scavengers and they were unclean animals, according to the Jewish law. So the Jews refer to the Gentiles as dogs. They're

unclean people, just like dogs. And that image might have come to the woman's mind when the Lord used that term. But He softens the edges of it, so to speak, by using the diminutive form meaning something like little dogs or puppies, and He may have been referring to household pets. But even so, dogs nonetheless.

What the Lord was doing was making certain that she understood that there was an historic distinction between the Jew and the Gentile. He was not saying that the Gentiles would not receive salvation and kingdom blessings. The word "first" in that statement would suggest differently. He says, "Let the children be satisfied first," and the suggestion of that is then later, after they have been satisfied, the Gentiles will also receive those blessings, and in fact, his excursion into that Gentile territory would seem in some way to have foreshadowed future Gentile evangelism. But that was not yet. The covenant promises were made to Israel and Israel had the first claim on them, and through Israel, through Israel's Messiah and through the men of Israel that would go out into the world, the promises and the blessings would come to the Gentiles.

We see that in a number of places. The woman of Samarian, for example, and again in John chapter 4, when the Lord is speaking to her, He says that salvation is from the Jews. An Old Testament saint came to that salvation through Israel and in the more significant way, that salvation came to them from the Jewish people because the Messiah came from the Jewish people. Paul begins the book of Romans by declaring that the gospel is for the Jew first and also for the Greek. That is the historical program and plan as it is unfolded by God. That was the divine plan of salvation. The Lord Jesus knew that, that was the Will of God, and as an obedient servant, He was to follow that plan. He would still be obedient to that plan. So first He must make a full offer of the kingdom and its blessings to the Jews, and He was in the process of doing that. He was in the process of feeding them those promises, and he couldn't interrupt the meal.

He couldn't do that by throwing the children's bread, the blessings and the promises of the kingdom, to the dogs. The children were to be fed first. So on the surface, His statement was a denial of her request, a denial of her prayer. But through that denial, He was both giving an understanding of His mission to this woman and He was testing her faith. And the silence of God, as we see here, is a great test of faith – but a test that always has a good and beneficial purpose. And we see from verse 28 that she responded well. If the parable gave a despairing picture, she turned it into a delightful picture, one of little dogs playing under the table of little children, without denying anything that the Lord said. She points out in verse 28 that even the little dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs. They don't interrupt the meal, and since a child's meal can feed both them and the dogs, the mercy of God is great enough for all of Israel and for her daughter as well.

It was really a remarkable response. She didn't challenge her status as a dog. One might think that that's what she'd do, that He would make this analogy and it would sort of draw her up and incite her pride a bit and she'd say, "You know, I come to you seeking mercy and help. You've come into our back yard, into our own territory, and you call me a dog?" She doesn't do that. Her pride doesn't rise up against that description of herself as being undeserving. She submits to it. She doesn't argue that her needs made her some kind of an exception. Doesn't say, "I realize that you have this mission to your people, but I have a great need. Don't be insensitive to that." She doesn't do that. She might have tried to assert that over the blessings that Israel deserved first but she doesn't. Nor does she protest that divine election is unfair.

She doesn't challenge that at all. She simply asks for help. "Yes, Lord, but even the little dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs." She recognized her true spiritual status. She was like those little dogs, not in the sense that we might think of little

puppies or little dogs as playful, lovable little creatures. That isn't what she was saying. She wasn't appealing to that figure in order to sort of elicit from him the kind of affection that we sometimes can't help but feel for little creatures like that. She used that term in the sense that she was dependent. She was helpless like a little pup that can't fend for itself. She needed help. And after all, God's mercy is for the helpless.

Well, this is just what the Lord wanted to hear. He wasn't put off by her persistence, He's never put off by our persistence, He responds to her with great delight. We read in verse 29: "And He said to her, 'Because of this answer go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.'" Now, that statement by our Lord is one that's really filled with a great deal of emotion. We don't really capture that in Mark's statement here, but when Matthew records this, he adds something that Mark did not record. He adds the words "O woman, your faith is great." The Lord was greatly impressed with what she said. She answered well and the Lord was pleased with her. She showed perception, she showed wit, and most importantly, faith. Faith that was an obvious rebuke to Israel's unbelief. The nation that was to be the light to the Gentiles would reject Him. Its leaders had already rejected Him. But He was received by a Canaanite, a descendant of Israel's ancient enemies.

Pharisees quibbled over their traditions of washing and cleanness while she simply believed in Him and she showed in doing that that she was far more clean, far purer than they were. She wouldn't have measured up to their standards of purity. But the Lord was very pleased with her because He's pleased with faith.

Now, it would be easy to leave it at that point and say what a rebuke she is to Israel, what a rebuke she is to those people who are caught up in their formalism and their ritualism and all of that, but the fact is she also stands as something of a rebuke to the church today. How often do we complain about our own lot in life and

harbor a grudge against God because we don't think we're getting what we deserve. We have an affliction, we have a difficulty and it's naturally painful and difficult and we go through a struggle with it, and we pray and maybe we don't receive an answer immediately and we begin to become angry about that, bitter about that. I think it's common among all of us. We all do that to some extent. Or how many Christians resist the doctrines of God's grace and election? And protest that it's unfair as though we can determine these matters? As though God doesn't have a sovereign right over His creation to rule it as He wills? And so we have some kind of insight on all of these things and that we have some kind of claim upon His mercy whereby we can declare what's fair and what's not fair and we can overrule the Almighty?

God says, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy." "That is my choice, my prerogative, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." And yet men resist that with all their strength. Not this woman. A Gentile and a Canaanite who lived in spiritual darkness without the advantages that we possess in our day and age with the full revelation of God, and yet she didn't protest against the Lord. She didn't claim that she deserved better but she acknowledged her unworthiness and recognized His right to reject her over Israel if He chose to do that. She teaches us a great deal about faith, about the attitude with which one is to approach the Lord, and very simply it is that attitude of humble submission to Him. Teaches us a lot about that approach to the Lord and in so doing, she teaches us how faith works in prayer. The lesson is very simple. When in distress, pray according to God's Will and pray persistently.

Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch theologian and statesmen, said of her, "She prayed relentlessly and because she persevered, she triumphed." Perseverance is the great sign of faith. We learn that from this woman and we learn the benefits and the blessings of persevering, but we also learn from the Lord's response to her how he

develops that persevering faith in us. And again, it illustrates how well He dealt with people and how well He is still dealing with people. He knew just how to draw out of her the full expression of her faith in a way that wouldn't have occurred had he answered her immediately as we might have expected. But because He did not answer her immediately, because there was silence, her faith was drawn out. As difficult as that silence is, it urges us on in prayer and it causes us to exercise a more strenuous effort in faith, and with a straining of faith, there comes a strengthening of faith and that's what He was producing in her.

And that's what He produces in us as we respond properly to every way in which He deals with us. Oftentimes it's in silence. In the meantime, during those times of silence, we should be able to say, "Lord, this is where you have me today. Perhaps this is where you have me for the days to come. Give me the grace to live in your strength and give me the grace to learn the lessons that you would teach me in this period of time," and say that with the conviction, with the certainty, that He is going to bless you, He's going to bless all of us, through those difficulties. Strength in faith, development in the Christian life, becoming like Him comes through a struggle, doesn't come easy. Comes through a struggle. And this woman was put through a struggle, put through difficulties. And the strength of that Canaanite woman's perseverance was that she knew Christ was merciful, and the result of her perseverance in faith was she triumphed. Verse 30 states that when she arrived home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having departed.

Well, following this, the Lord traveled north to Sidon along the Mediterranean coast and then turned southeasterly, entering the region of Decapolis on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and there He performed another miracle. None of the other gospels contain this account but it, too, shows the wisdom and the diversity with which Christ deals with us. When He arrived, verse 32 states a man was

brought to Him who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and the people of the region, knowing of the Lord's power and knowing of His willingness to heal, came and they begged Him to lay His hand upon this man. And rather than challenge their request as He had done with the Canaanite woman, He took the man aside by himself and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva.

He deals with this man in a completely different way from the way that He dealt with that Canaanite woman and her daughter. He healed the child without a word, without a touch. He healed her from a distance, and yet we look at this man and it's all done in a very tangible and symbolical way. There's no healing virtue in these gestures that our Lord makes. The saliva was probably used because it is essential for speaking, and by placing it on the man's tongue, He was showing him that it is from our Lord that the cure will come, that He is the source of the man's blessing, the man's restoration of speech, and by placing His fingers in his ears, He was showing that it was He who would open those ears, He's the source of blessing.

A different method but the same goal: to help the man exercise faith. He was deaf, he couldn't hear what the Lord commanded him, so that if He commanded him to believe, the man wouldn't have heard it. He was mute, he couldn't confess faith if the Lord had called that forth, and being helpless, the Lord then used various means to indicate to this man what He was doing and that he was to expect a cure, and in so doing, the Lord was awakening within him faith. He dealt with him in a very different way from the way in which He dealt with the woman because the Lord doesn't deal with us all in the same way and He doesn't deal with us in a mechanical way. He employs a variety of means to bring us to Himself. There's only one way of salvation, there's only one way to salvation, but there are many ways to that one way, and He uses a variety of ways to bring us. He uses a variety of ways to awaken faith within us, and He uses a variety of

ways and methods to strengthen and to develop that faith.

Doesn't deal with us in a mechanical way, nor does He deal with us in an unsympathetic way, and that's clear from what follows because looking up to heaven in prayer, we read that He gave a deep sigh and then He declares, "Be opened." Now, why does He give that deep sigh? Different answers have been given to that question. It's one of those that kind of puzzle, one of those statements of Scripture that tend to puzzle commentators and some have said that it indicates a great struggle that He was engaged in with Satan, assuming that this man was demon possessed. Others have described this – A. T. Robertson, for example – as a nervous strain that we can't understand. Well, I think that we can understand it if we understand what our Lord was doing here was taking that man's sorrows and that man's difficulties upon himself and empathizing or sympathizing deeply with that man.

We do that ourselves to an extent. I had something of an interesting experience not long ago, a week or so ago, when I was studying this very statement, this very statement where he says, where Mark writes "with a deep sigh" He was praying, and having studied that, I went into the other room to watch the 5:30 news, the national news, and as I was doing that a scene appeared from one of the troubled spots of the world. A bomb had exploded in a residential street and a little boy was standing against the wall. It was cold, it was rainy, and he was shivering and he was crying as he told of holding his little sister as she lay bleeding in his arms. And instinctively I found myself giving a deep sigh when I heard that, and it's the natural response to a soul-wrenching sight. We take people's sorrows to heart, and I think the more like Christ that we become, the more we tend to do that. Well, if we do that, how much more our Lord who was perfect and whose perception and sensitivity was not in any way made callous by sin because He was perfect?

Nobody could feel for this man and this man's condition as our

Lord did, and when He saw him, He saw one of His creatures suffering the effects of the fall, and as his Creator, it grieved Him and it called forth from Him a deep sigh. The Lord is not impassive toward these things. He's not unfeeling toward our difficulties. He's our great high priest who, as the author of Hebrews tells us, is sympathetic and is active. He intercedes for us with effective life-changing prayers. Not just empty sympathy but life-changing prayers that are moved and motivated by deep-felt sympathy for us and our condition, and His prayers being effective are perfect. And He's praying for each and every one of us. He's praying for you and for me at all times at this very moment. He is in constant, perfect, deep intercession for us in all of our needs in all of our conditions, and so we have every reason to be encouraged by that fact.

Had a lady call me the other day in a bit of distress, and she asked me to pray for her and then she gave me the request. It was a very brief conversation. Made her request, hung up, and I entered into prayer for her and have prayed for her since. But with Christ, we don't have to ask Him to pray for us. He's already praying for us, constantly praying for us. In fact, He is praying for our various needs before they ever come to our attention and praying prayers that must be answered. As I said, His prayers are effective.

And we see the effect of His sympathetic prayer in verse 35 of our passage. It was immediate and it was complete. His ears were opened and the impediment of his tongue was removed or literally the bond or the chain of his tongue was loosed and he began speaking plainly. What a contrast to what tries to pass itself off today on the naïve and the despairing as divine healing. If Christ was truly healing today through the men who claim that He is, they would be doing the same kinds of healings with the same success that's recorded in the gospels. But for all their claims to success, they have multitudes of failures, and they leave people in greater despair. I've witnessed it. Perhaps you've witnessed it as well. The claims of

these modern miracle workers shouldn't be judged upon the basis of their claims to success; they should be judged on the basis of their failures.

You say, "Why do you say that? That's a little bit unfair." I say that because our Lord had no failures, and if they're doing His work, they'll be doing it His way, and there'll be no failures, no half successes. He was always successful. His cures were always complete. His cures were always perfect, and the people recognized that and they were moved by it greatly. Now, He warns them, having performed this miracle, in verse 36 not to tell others of what He had done. The reason for that is He didn't want to be known as a miracle worker. He didn't want to be known as a healer because all of that was simply ancillary to His service, His great ministry, was only supplemental to it, and that service, that ministry, was a ministry of spiritual salvation, which will result ultimately in physical salvation as well. As Dr. Boice pointed out this last week, what good does it do to heal a person, restore them perfectly, and their soul perish eternally in hell?

Israel was clamoring – and not just Israel but those around on the borders of Israel were clamoring for the miraculous, were clamoring for physical blessings, and He did not want that to become the focus of His ministry. He was there as Savior of men. So He discourages them from spreading the word, but the word spread anyway, and as it did, the resounding verdict was He has done all things well. That verdict stands today. Not only has He done all things well, He is presently doing all things well. He is dealing with us with the same perfection, the same insight, that He did then. He is putting His finger on our every problem. He knows our needs, He deals with us individually in a variety of ways as each situation requires, and so sometimes prayers are answered in different ways. Sometimes they're answered immediately, miraculously, as with the man who was deaf and dumb. Those responses give relief, they give

encouragement, particularly to the young believer, strengthens faith with that encouragement.

But other times the answers don't come for some period of time. Well, the Lord's not less involved with us when the answers don't come immediately. It may be that we're not praying according to His Will, and if that's the case, He's not going to give us that which we want because it's not for our good, it's not for our best. But it may be that He's delaying, so to speak, He's remaining quiet in order to strengthen our faith. We're praying correctly, He's not answering because He will answer in His good time in the right way, and in the meantime, He's doing with us what He did with that Canaanite woman. He's drawing out of us faith, He's causing us to strain at our faith, so to speak, and in so doing strengthen our faith, make us more persistent in faith, cause us to exercise our faith. He knows best how to deal with each of us and we must rest confident in that. That takes faith, but faith is what pleases Him and that's what He's seeking to develop in us.

And as He does and as we respond to Him in obedience, we grow in our faith and we with that growth serve Him, and someday faithful service will be rewarded with that great pronouncement, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And then while we may not understand everything that we experience in this day and this time of our life, then we will look back on our lives and we will see how He orchestrated every event perfectly, and that the prayers that He answered, He answered with perfect timing in the best way, and we will say, of all of the ways in which He dealt with us, He has done all things well. And that confession will be made firstly in connection with what He did at the cross. The cross of Christ is the universal magnet. It draws all men to Himself; that is, all kinds of men. The power of the cross is witnessed in all kinds of people.

They are all spiritually incapacitated, and I think this passage gives us a very clear picture of what the world is like outside of

Christ. The child cruelly possessed of a demon and the man with his physical impairment, they all illustrate the spiritual realities of our fallen race. The world is under the influence of the devil. As John says, the whole world lies in the evil one, and men and unbelief are as incapable of hearing the truth and confessing faith in Christ as Savior as that deaf mute was in hearing the Lord's commands and as expressing anything to him and calling to our Lord himself. Mark may have seen in all these miracles a reminder to the church of his day and a reminder to the church of our day, a reminder to the church throughout the ages, that faith in Christ is a miracle that's produced by Christ.

It's only as He opens our ears that we are able to hear His Word and confess that He is Lord and Savior. Only as He speaks and commands us through the Holy Spirit that the chains are broken and we become free and alive to Him. Only He can do that but He promises to do that. He promises to impart that faith to multitudes of people.

So if you're here and have not believed in Christ as Savior, then you are living in darkness, spiritual darkness, much like that Canaanite woman was living in, and you are deaf to the truth, just as that man of Decapolis was, and you cannot confess faith in Christ of yourself until He first opens your ears to understand the gospel of forgiveness, until He gives you that understanding that you are helpless and guilty, without merit. But if you sense that that is your condition, then perhaps the Lord is speaking to you, giving to you understanding. If that's the case, turn to Him. Trust in Him. And as you do, you will find that you can do that because His grace and His mercy gives that ability. Believe in Jesus Christ with the faith that He supplies, find forgiveness and deliverance, spiritual life in Christ, and you will rejoice in that and you will confess that truly He has done all things well. May God help you to do that. May God help all of us to rest in the confidence that we should have in our Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ. Shall we stand now for the benediction?[Prayer]
Gracious Heavenly Father, we are thankful for the blessings that we receive from you. We only confess that we don't see the blessings as readily as we should, see the abundance of the blessings that are ours. We are blessed in ways that we don't even understand, and when we pray to you, while we may see it as a slow response on your part, Paul tells us you do exceeding, abundantly beyond all that we ask or think. We're no judge of these things. And yet we so often make ourselves the judge of your actions and your deeds. We confess that's a sin, we're wrong. You do all things well, Father, even though we fail to recognize it, but we do see it in this passage and we praise you for it. And we thank you that you have sent your Son to die for sinners and that we have life in Him and all who turn to Him will be saved, be accepted by you, will be made righteous by you. Help us to understand that, Father. Help us to be appreciative of that. And we pray that if there be any in attendance that don't know Christ, move upon their hearts, cause them to turn to you to receive salvation. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.