

The Sigh and Spittle
The Gospel of Mark #28
Mark 31-37

From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised. For the Lord is exalted over all the nations. His glory reaches far above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high? Therefore, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who trusts in him.

I don't remember the first time I learned to say the Lord's Prayer from memory. I can't think back that far. But I'd imagine it sounded a lot like this Children's version of it I ran across a week or so ago: Our Father, whose art is in heaven. Harold is his name. Thy King Kong Dome. Thy pills be gone. On earth as it is in heaven. Give us, this day, our Bailey's Bread. And forgive us of our trash passes, as we forgive those who trash pass against us. The Word of God is full of some of the most beautiful prayers that have ever ascended upwards from the earth to reach the throne room of the Almighty from the holes in the floor of heaven. Jesus modeled the most common one: *Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* He also prayed the most painful one: *Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not my will but your will be done.* Jabez voiced the most hopeful one: *Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory. Let your hand be with me and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.* The thief on the cross prayed the most desperate one: *Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.* And the apostle Paul prayed my favorite one: *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have the power to grasp how wide, long, high, and deep is the love of Christ and to know this loves that surpasses all knowledge – that you may be filled with the fullness of God.*

The passage of Scripture before us today includes a prayer of Jesus that I will assure you that you will never forget. It's not one that starts with "Our Father, who art in heaven," "or "oh that you would bless indeed." As a matter of fact, what makes this prayer memorable is that Jesus doesn't even use words to pray. He only sighs. And after the sigh that ascended upwards to reach the throne room of His Father, he spit into his hands and proceeded to heal a man who was deaf and could only communicate to others by sighing and stuttering himself. And the sigh and spittle from Jesus were enough to open this man's ears and loosen his tongue. Here's why that's important. According to the Apostle Paul, when we cannot seem to pray, the Spirit of God lives to make intercessions for us with groanings that are too deep for words. When your words are few, His sigh is enough. As a result, I want to give you for lessons you can learn from the sigh and spittle. We find them in Mark 7:31-37. Turn there with me.

³¹ Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. ³² There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him. ³³ 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. ³⁴ He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!"). ³⁵ At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak plainly. ³⁶ Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷ People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

1. The best thing you can do for a hurting friend is show them Jesus (31-32).

- **Friendship Definition:** (1) If I asked you to define the word "friend," your definitions would all be good and original. (2) Some might say a friend "multiplies joys and divides grief." (3) Others might say a friend is "a watch that beats true for all time and never runs down." (4) My definition of a friend is this "the one who comes in when the whole world has gone out." (5) One of the greatest pieces of information we learn about friendship from the Bible comes right here in this passage. This man was hurting. The world had gone out. So, they came in and took him to Jesus.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** There are friends within your sphere of influence who may never go to church or even have an interest in Jesus. But God will call you, a friend of God, to show them Jesus when they are in crisis.
- **Textual Emphasis: The Friends of God Contrast:** (1) Mark 7 is a chapter of contrasts between those who are "friends of God" and those who are not. It starts with the Pharisees and scribes criticizing the disciples for not washing their hands before eating. Thus, producing the response that it is what's inside that defiles a person. (2) Then Mark switches to Jesus in Gentile lands. The Syro-Phoenician woman is healed from her demonic possession upon her profession that "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Unlike the previous, she understands faith in Christ as a Gentile and Jesus commends her. (3) Here, Jesus and the disciples are still in Gentile territory (Decapolis). And some friends bring a deaf and tongue-tied man to Jesus. Decapolis is in the same vicinity of the Gerasenes, where Jesus exorcised the man who was living among the tombstones. He wanted to come with Jesus after it. But he stayed and spread the Word. We can assume the message spread because these friends to Jesus as soon as he arrives. The man wouldn't have come by himself, so his friends brought him. Thus, implying the Gentiles understood the meaning of friends/neighbors of God and each other more than the Pharisees.
- **App:** Do an inventory of your circle of influence and friendships in your soul and think of those who wouldn't come to church or might even fit the "pagan" category. Jesus will call you to show them His character when they are hurting. The Pharisees and scribes didn't understand that. These Gentile friends did. We must also.

2. The Savior of the world relates to us individually (33-34).

- **The Businessman and Mark Twain:** (1) Once upon a time, there lived a businessman from Boston who was known internationally for his ruthlessness. (2) He met Mark Twain at an event and announced to him: "before I die, I'm going to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I'm going to climb Mount Sinai and read the 10 Commandments aloud at the top." (3) To which Twain responded, "I have a better idea because I know you quite well. Why don't you just stay in Boston and keep them. (4) That's Mark Twain for you. One of the greatest writers who ever put quill to vellum. But what made him great was the ability to relate to his audience personally.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Jesus relates to us privately and personally just like he did with this man who benefited from His sigh and saliva: he took him aside, away from the crowd.
- **Textual Emphasis: Pulling Him Aside and Ephphatha:** (1) Mark informs us that Jesus took this man aside, away from the crowd. What a beautiful image of how he relates to us individually. (2) There are more than 7 billion people in the world, yet the Savior of the universe made time for this one man who needed him. There are more than 300 million people on the planet who suffer from hearing loss of some kind, yet our Savior made time for this one man. (3) And how he healed him is another beautiful portrait: with an action and a word. (a) He used spittle/saliva to heal his tongue. Saliva was thought to have medicinal qualities in the ancient world. It doesn't. But Jesus did. (b) And he spoke a word to heal his hearing: Ephphatha. It's Aramaic for "be opened."
- **App:** Just a word from Jesus changed this man's whole life. That doesn't happen without the Savior relating to each of us personally.

3. Jesus understands our pain (34)

- **The Greatest Prophecy in the Bible:** (1) I received a random question via email the other day worded like this "Preacher. What's the greatest prophecy in the Bible." (2) My response were words from Isaiah about Jesus recorded 700 years before his birth: "But he was pierced for our transgression, he was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5). (3) Friends, the Suffering Servant still understands our pain all these years later.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Jesus' sigh just before healing this man was not only a prayer, but it was also a sign of identification. He sighed before the healing because was a man of sorrows familiar with suffering. And He sighed because He's our high priest able, able to sympathize with whatever it is that causes us to sigh.
- **Textual Emphasis: The Sigh:** (1) Mark now records for us the only prayer of Jesus with no words: a sigh. (2) There are all different kinds of sigh. We breathe one for relief when the doctor tells us there is no cancer. We utter a sigh of fatigue after chasing the dogs around the neighborhood. And we utter sighs of anguish/distress when we are in emotional, physical, or spiritual pain. (3) The point of the sigh from Mark's perspective is a play on images. (4) This man sighed as a way of life. He couldn't speak any intelligible words. So, Jesus sighed in his prayer before healing him. It's not only a prayer, but also a sigh of identification. (5) He would later do this again in moments of people's distress. He sighed at the tomb of Lazarus when he saw the tears of Mary. (6) In Romans 8, we read all creation sighs and eagerly awaits redemption. (7) And praise the Lord when Jesus comes to make all things new, we will ride his sigh and spittle into glory.
- **App:** Cast your cares upon him for he cares for you (1 Peter 5:7)

4. All will eventually be well (32, 37).

- **Paul Makai:** (1) There lives a man in Africa who is the leader of the Evangelical Church of Zambia, a position he has been in since 1978. (2) It's a miracle he occupies that position. (3) His primitive years were spent in squalid conditions because he was dirt poor. To make matters worse, he lost family members through civil war and nearly lost his own life. (4) Yet during all that, he still found time to pen a simple hymn you've probably heard a time or two: "God is so good. God is so good. He's so good to me. He cares for me. He cares for me. He's so good to me." (5) All will eventually be well because Jesus is working to make things all things new.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Though he was deaf and mute, all would eventually be well in this man's life because Jesus was the Messiah who makes all things new. Though creation is spiritually deaf and mute, all will eventually be well because the Messiah will make all things new. For all of creation eagerly waits for the day for the children of God to be revealed.
- **Textual Emphasis: The Speech Impediment and Connection to He Does Everything Well:** (1) In verse 32, Mark tells us that this man has a speech impediment (tongue tied). The word he uses is only used one other time in the Scriptures: Isaiah 35:6. (2) Listen to it. It's a prophecy recorded by Isaiah 7 centuries before this event happened: "Then will the lame leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy." (3) One of the requirements of the Messiah the people of God looked for was he will be able to make the lame walk and be able to unloose the tongue of the mute. And they had just witnessed one. (4) As a result, they were convinced the people who bore witness to this proclaimed, "he does everything well." That's a way of saying: the Messiah has come to make all things new.
- **App:** The Messiah will come again to make all things new. And all will be well once again because Jesus is the Messiah. So, friend, don't live as those who have no hope. Trust in the Lord, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. All will be well.