

“The Greatest Show on Earth?”—Mark 7:32-37

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The Greatest Show on Earth?”, is Mark 7:31-37 → *They brought to Jesus a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged Him to lay His hand on him. And taking him aside from the crowd privately, He put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, He sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

What would it take to gain your undivided attention? What is it that would totally impress you? It seems that in our technological society today a “laser light show” with all the “bells and whistles” is required in order to get someone’s undivided attention. Conditioned by television, it is easy to expect a presenter, event or experience to do the work of holding our attention in such a manner that it is effortless for us. Some researchers believe video

technology has turned us into a lazy people with a short attention span. Oh that we could perform miracles as Jesus and have people's undivided attention!

What would you consider the greatest show on earth? Many of you may remember the Barnum and Bailey Circus which laid claim to being the greatest show on earth. However impressive it may have been, it paled in comparison to the public ministry of Jesus when He performed miracles! Verse 37 of our text says the people who experienced His miracles *were astonished beyond measure*, probably feeling like they had just experienced the greatest show on earth!

While Jesus was not simply putting on the greatest "show" on earth, He was showing something to them about His Person and Work in their lives! Jesus did not simply perform miracles to put on a great "show." Rather, through these miracles He led people to faith in Yahweh, to faith in Himself as His promised Savior and revealed that God's redemption was at hand!

Jesus' miracles connected Him to the Old Testament prophecies which were very specific about how a person could recognize the Messiah. For instance, Isaiah 35:5-6 says of His coming: *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.* These words of prophesy

speak of God's Messiah coming to help His people and revealing Himself through the miraculous signs He performed. Even though these words speak of physical healing, there is more than just physical healing that needs to take place in our lives. The primary purpose for the coming of Jesus was our spiritual healing by His dealing with sin once and for all.

Thus, opening *the eyes of the blind* refers more specifically to dealing with our spiritual blindness. Jesus came so those who are blind to God and blind to their sin in unbelief will see their sin, confess their sin to God and know His forgiveness in Jesus. Paul referred to it in Ephesians 1:18 as *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you* in Christ Jesus. *The ears of the deaf* being *unstopped* also refers to unbelievers. Instead of turning "a deaf ear" to God and His written Word they will be able to hear His Word of grace and trust in Jesus for salvation! These actions are referring to the spiritual transformation that God wants to take place in every human heart by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace!

These physical miracles of Jesus were evidence that the time of God's ultimate deliverance from sin had come in the Person & Work of His Messiah. Jesus pointed John the Baptizer's disciples to these miraculous works when they inquired about Jesus being the Messiah. Jesus said in Matthew 11:4-5

→ *Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.* John would immediately associate the works of the coming Messiah from the Old Testament with Jesus because of the evidence of these miracles.

So . . . in one respect, the healing of this *man who was deaf and had a speech impediment*, as with all Jesus' miraculous works, truly was "the greatest show on earth"—showing the people that God loves them and keeps His promises by sending His Messiah to deliver them from sin in the Person & Work of Jesus.

Even though Jesus was performing the greatest show of God's love on earth, notice it was not intended to be "showy"—that is, to simply impress people. To heal this man verse 33 of our text tells us that Jesus took *him aside from the crowd privately*. Interesting. Usually if you want to perform the greatest "show" on earth you "show off" where the crowd is gathered to make sure that everybody can see it! By this action it appears that Jesus cared more for this man's individual situation. He treated him as an individual with God's love and care, not just as a "case."

True to His Person & Work Jesus dealt with this man very incarnationally. Verse 33 of our text also tells us Jesus *put His fingers into his*

ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. Notice the very **personal** nature of Jesus' actions with this man. It may have been His way of meeting this man's need "where he was" much in the same way we talk about meeting people "where they're at." It may have been His efforts to communicate with him in ways that were possible for him to see, letting him know that He was going to something to his hearing and speaking. Again, he was not just a "case" for Jesus. He was a soul whom Jesus loved!

Can you imagine how this man must have felt when *his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly!*? Could he have felt like he had just experienced the "greatest show on earth?" Very likely most people would have felt that way if they were in his sandals! It must have been an amazing thing for him to experience!

This feeling must have made Jesus' command in verse 36 of our text difficult to "shallow" → *Jesus charged them to tell no one.* "Don't tell anyone? Are You kidding, Jesus?" Aside from testifying to the fact that Jesus wasn't just doing this to be "showy," there was a reason for this command at this particular point in His earthly ministry. The greatest show of God's power on earth was yet to come but it had to come according to God's timing.

Jesus' whole purpose was to perform the greatest miracle in our lives—bringing us into a new relationship with the LORD eternally! It would involve

taking all the judgement, punishment and penalty for your sin upon Himself on the cross and then rising again to defeat satan and sin! Jesus didn't want people to experience His healing in their life just to tell others about the wonderful thing that happened to them. Far too often people respond in this way to God's working in their lives. They focus so much on the miracle that they miss the Messiah. He wants you to place your faith in Him based upon the wonderful accomplished work of your salvation in the cross and resurrection which happened in God's time and God's way!

The greatest "show" on this earth for us sinners was when Jesus suffered and He died and then rose again in order to crush the power of sin, death and the devil in your life forever!! All of these miracles in the earthly ministry of Jesus found their greatest meaning in His greatest show of God's love for you in the cross and resurrection!! He wants you to see His miracles in light of that great event by His power and grace! Jesus doesn't want you to simply have a whole new body. He wants you to have a whole new perspective of life with a heart marked with the cross of Jesus Christ!

Through faith in Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit creates the desire to share the Good News of that greatest show of God's love for you. In the midst of knowing that our lives are changed, new, and forgiven in Jesus, the Holy Spirit gives us the boldness of the disciples in Acts 4:20 when they said: *We cannot*

but speak of what we have seen and heard. In the words of the old hymn, we love to tell the story of Jesus and His love! That's what it's all about. The miracles of Christ have set you free from the bondage of sin!! He has freed up your ears so that you can hear the Gospel and believe in Jesus as your Savior!! He has freed up your ears so that you can hear His Word and be empowered by His Holy Spirit each and everyday! He has freed up your tongue so that you can speak that Word clearly to others and tell them what great things God has also done **for them** in Christ!

It's not just the greatest "show" on earth. It's how God showed His great love in His Son, Jesus Christ so that you can be forgiven, empowered, redeemed and live forever in heaven with Him!! Amen.

Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

(Romans 10:17)