

Guest Speaker at Mission Church

Some People

Mark 7:31-37

Eric Cepin
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I am a pastor at the Village; I think you have heard from Rod before (the big guy) and together we planted the Village 20+ years ago. The Village calls you a “sister” church but I guess you are a long-lost sister that we never talk to. I have only spoken to you in the summers so I only know Mission summer people.

As churches we agree that Jesus was fully God, fully man, lived a life we couldn't live and died a death we couldn't die for our sins, he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven and on Pentecost, the Father and Son sent the Spirit to you and me. This is important because in July, 2024 we believe you can encounter Jesus!

Dramatic encounters create communities of some people and some people change the world.

To understand what I mean by this, let's look at the narrative that forms Mark 7, our text for today. This is about Jesus on the shores in Greece when he encounters an Hulk-like, crazy, demon-possessed man that cannot be subdued. Jesus casts the demons into some pigs who jump over a hill and die. The pig herders tell everyone what happened and everyone comes to find the crazy man in his right mind. The people respond with fear and ask Jesus to leave. He agrees to leave but the man wants to follow Jesus and doesn't want to return home:

Mark 5:1-20

18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. **19** Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” **20** So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

I think we can agree this was a dramatic, major, and unusual encounter where Jesus brings a man who was not in his right mind into a calm place. But when the man wants to go with Jesus, Jesus wants him to go home and tell what the Lord has done for him.

Up to this point, his story was about being crazy and strong. But now he has a new story: he is calm and completely transformed. Jesus wants him to talk about the

MERCY that was shown to him. Mercy is a rather simple concept: it means Jesus KNOWS ME, SAW ME, and CALLED ME. He called the man out of his insanity into a right place. Perhaps the man established a pottery business from which he could tell his story for years to many people. He went back to his home (the Decapolis) and the people were amazed.

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You might think these stories are about a blind and a mute guy but I want to suggest to you that it's really about **some people**. Let's read Mark 7:

Mark 7:31-37 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.

Some people: by the time Jesus gets to the Decapolis region, the story of the demon-possessed man is everywhere and this has created a community of "**some people**." In Mark 20, the resurrection narrative includes Jesus appearing to his disciples, all except Thomas. Thomas doesn't believe until Jesus appears again and Thomas now believes. Jesus then turns to us: He says to Thomas that he believes because he has seen but blessed are those who believe but have not seen: These are **SOME PEOPLE**.

The people who heard this story about the demon-possessed man believed that Jesus could transform things. Consequently, they brought a deaf man to Jesus and begged him to place his hands on the man. If you are blind, you are disoriented. But if you're deaf, you probably don't have language or community. In the 1st century, sign language was not developed: this man had no friends because he couldn't connect with others. Nevertheless, this man had people bring him to Jesus. When it says that they begged Jesus to place his hands on him, the NIV is saying they "implored" Jesus: ***we are not leaving until you touch him because we know what you can do.***

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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.

This is weird: Tim Keller said that Jesus was speaking in sign language which the man could understand. Other commentators say spit was a healing balm. But I think it was just weird! When you encounter Jesus, it is often weird.

I once had an experience with big Rod who was told that he needed knee surgery for his really bad knee. We were in a leadership meeting and Rod couldn't get up because his knee was locked. We wanted to pray over Rod but we couldn't find any anointing oil except for some Pam spray. My friend Keith sprayed Rod's whole leg liberally. We prayed for Rod and he stood up; later, his doctors said they could no longer find any issues in his knee. We call this the "Pam Spray Miracle" but we have never done this since. This is kind of like this particular encounter with Jesus who likes to do things differently and surprise us.

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.

Jesus has a deep sigh: Why? I think Mark is communicating that Jesus IS the Messiah but before he does that, he wants us to know Jesus is human in a broken world that he is called to redeem. Jesus feels what this man has walked through, the ostracism he has felt. Mark wants us to know that this healing is not only physical but spiritual. Catholics will actually touch your ears and tongue and say "epaphra" when they baptize you.

36 Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it.

Jesus kept trying to tell people to stop talking about this. Notice that every time Jesus heals people, he gets pushed further and further out. Maybe he wants them to just let him travel and teach. But people would not listen:

37 People were overwhelmed with amazement.

It was like they had just jumped off a cliff!

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The beauty is that *you don't get to keep your story*: in fact, other people should be telling your story and be amazed! These stories create faith communities of encounters with Jesus and an understanding of who Jesus is. Then the people began to worship:

"He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

This is the same language in Isaiah referring to the Messiah:

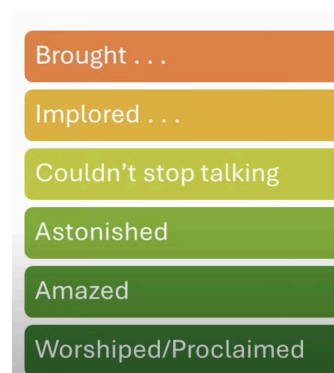
Isa 35:5: Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

This is more than healing a deaf man: he is putting down a stake and declaring he is the Messiah. The people are amazed.

Let's go back to **SOME PEOPLE**:

Both the demon-possessed man and the deaf man move to just being people, part of the community of God.

The other reality is that all of us are like these two man: wrestling and struggling to find healing through encounters with JESUS. Notice what people do in this text:



This list are the things that pastors do!

I john 1:3-5

3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

4 We write this to make our^[a] joy complete.

The apostles go out and tell what has happened to them so that the people can become part of community, have fellowship, and have joy. This is also about you and me. There are stories of dramatic encounters in this room, but the reality is that you and I are **SOME PEOPLE**. The job description above of pastors is actually your job description as well.

I Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

One of the things I work hard at the Village to understand is that all of us are priests, and moreover, we are KINGLY priests. We are chosen, part of a holy nation, to proclaim how people move from darkness to light. We become people who continually tell the stories of encounters with Jesus. But there is more: we seek these encounters with other people as well! Maybe the word "priest" is a hard word for you.



Some people are **VERY IMPORTANT PASTORS!**

You, not Andy (regular pastor) are **very important pastors**: we tend to look to others to be the pastor. But you have encountered Jesus and have a job to do: to imitate what the friends did for the deaf man:

Brought . . .

Implored . . .

Couldn't stop talking

Astonished

Amazed

Worshiped/Proclaimed

My question is: who is Jesus inviting you to bring to him? At your work, your neighbors?

It's not just bringing, though: it's imploring: it's in prayer on your knees asking for what I want in someone else's life. That is what a pastor does: I'm not leaving until You do something!

Then, we learn to talk: it's not natural to say how amazed we are about what Jesus does. We are subdued, but part of changing the world is not to stop talking about it. We are astonished and amazed, willing to tell other people's stories proclaiming what Jesus has done.

My encouragement to you is to take on this identity of a **VERY IMPORTANT PASTOR** this week. This ID is your primary identity, before you role as spouse, mom or dad, etc.

While I'm talking, I believe the Holy Spirit is doing work in you. Let's talk about this now!