

**Series: Book of Mark**  
***Jesus, the witch doctor?***  
**Scripture text: Mark 7:31-37**

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

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Pastor S.C. Brown

All over the world people worship something. All over the world people turn to someone or something when things aren't going well. Health is bad, child is ill, you lose your job, financially unable to pay the bills, bad weather coming, marriage a mess....we all turn somewhere when things are bad. Not always so when things are good. When things are good we usually don't run to the temple; don't run to the god house; don't go to church; don't pray or sing. God has our devotion and our attention-when he's needed!  
Sometimes only when he's needed.

Here are some questions for us: How much attention does God get when things are going well? Or a more difficult question: What makes our faith any different than the person who turns to the temple to burn incense? Or.. Do we approach Jesus like he's a witch doctor or medicine man? WU(1) Yi(1) 巫医

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We know from our study in Mark that there were MANY crowds that followed Jesus *around* but they didn't *follow* Jesus. They didn't believe. Some wanted to see cool miracles. Some wanted to get free food. Some

wanted to get free healthcare. Few really followed him because they wanted **HIM**. And yet, Jesus fed them anyway. Jesus healed them anyway...out of love and compassion.

Today in our study in Mark we come to an odd passage, just like last week when Jesus called a lady a dog. This week, we see Jesus do some odd things.

Turn in your Bible to Mark 7:31.

### **Mark 7:31-37**

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. 34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “**Ephphatha**,” that is, “Be opened.” 35 And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

Jesus had come from Lebanon, outside of Israel and now was still in a non-Jewish area called the Decapolis. Ten cities that were almost entirely pagan. And these

people brought to Jesus a man who had some problems. What were they?

He's deaf. That's simple enough. He cannot hear a thing. Yet it seems that he wasn't born deaf but had BECOME deaf at some point in his life. How do we know this? The scripture says in verse 32 that he has a 'speech impediment'. It literally means that he can '*hardly speak.*' So, he can speak....some. But not well. If you are born deaf, you have no idea how to speak but he must have been able to speak and now can't.

They begged Jesus to 'lay his hand on him'. We assume that they wanted him to be healed or at least blessed. Seems they weren't expecting him to really be healed though, cause of their response later of amazement. If you expected him to be healed, why would you be so shocked. Either way, they bring him to Jesus.

We have seen Jesus heal many people in the book of Mark already. Sometimes he touches them. Sometimes they touch his clothes. Sometimes he speaks and sometimes, like last week....he just does it...no words, no touch, no ABRACADABRA or Hocus-Pocus.

Jesus' response was quite strange. After taking him aside privately, we have this weird display by the Lord.

He 'puts his fingers in his ears'  
He 'spits and touches his tongue'

He 'looks up to heaven'

He 'sighs'

He says, 'Ephphatha'!

What are we to think of Jesus' actions?

At one level, Jesus is communicating with the man on a level he can understand. Jesus is speaking sign language. Remember, the man cannot hear but he *can* see.

-He puts his fingers in his ears to demonstrate to the man that he's going to heal his ears.

-He spits and touches the man's tongue to show the man that he's going to heal his mouth.

-He looks to heaven...as if to show the man that it is God who is doing this.

-He sighs as a sign of care and concern or perhaps not to show the man anything but because he DID care and was grieved over this man's condition due to the fall and sin.

-And then he SPEAKS.....

(Now that is one level. Communicating with the man in a way he can understand what he is doing for him.)

But there is another level.

There were many faith healers, medicine men and witch doctors around the ancient world. They would do such things as these to try to heal people. Spit itself, was considered a healing agent. The one who had the

power or life in himself would use spit to transmit the healing. And the medicine man or witch doctor would normally have a magic word...like Abracadabra that they would use to try and heal. This word was a secret word. No one knew it or the meaning except the Shaman himself.

Jesus was not only communicating with the man on a level that he could understand but he was communicating with the crowd and culture in a way that they could understand. It's called Contextualization.

But, Jesus does something odd. He does something that shocks them. He does something they didn't expect a wizard or medicine man to do!

He says, **EPHPHATHA.**

He speaks..not a magic word...not an Abracadabra..or Hocus-Pocus....but an ordinary word...Ephphatha. It's Aramaic. The common language of the locals. Mark, writing to Romans...has to translate it....

It means, **Be Opened. Open up!**

**One word changed everything.** One word changes this man's life, sets him free, makes him whole. One word and this man experiences a new creation. Can a witch doctor do that? Can a medicine man do that? Can a magician do that? No. But God can.

Because you see, Jesus is God in human flesh. He's not *like* God in human flesh, but he IS God in human flesh. The people came looking for magic and got the Messiah.

The people came looking for a witch doctor and got the Great Physician.

The people came looking for healer and got the Creator.

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How do we know this is what Mark is trying to communicate? Well, he gives us some hidden clues.

The first clue is in **Isaiah 35:1-6**

35:1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; 2 it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. **They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.**

3 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. 4 Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! **Behold, your God will come** with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and **the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.**

The word that Mark uses for 'speech impediment' is found only 2 times in the whole Bible. Isaiah 35 and Mark 7.

The other clue is the phrase he uses in Mark 7:37, “He has done all things well” the people said.

That’s an echo of **Genesis 1:31** which says,

“31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

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Listen what the Bible says about Jesus Christ.

**John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

**Colossians 1:15** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

**Hebrews 1:1**

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds

the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

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That's what the Bible says about Jesus Christ but I am afraid that it is very easy for us to treat him like a witch doctor or our own personal medicine man.

We run to him when things get bad but otherwise we just do what we want. You see, a witch doctor isn't to get to know and have a relationship with. He's just there for the emergencies!

But **Jesus is KING**. We don't come to him on our own terms. We die. We surrender. God wants it all. Give God 100% of your life. What are you holding back? {He wants our Entertainment, Lifestyle, Sports, Business, Education, Funnies....everything}

Imagine what it would be like if you gave him 100%? Imagine what it would be like if we esteemed him for who he really is?

What would it be like if our church held nothing back?

- What would it be like if you started each day in the word and prayer?
- What would it be like if we all committed ourselves to a weekly small group?
- What would it be like if we all were focused on engaging others with the gospel?