

Courage, Healing and Proclaiming Loudly

Mark 7:24–37

Mark 7:24–37 is a scripture that should catch our attention and make us ask a number of questions about Jesus and faith. Who is this Jesus? Why does he speak in such gruff tones? Jesus seems to be “caught with his compassion down.” Jesus is tired and exhausted, so he seeks solitude. A woman hears about him, seeks him out, and asks him to cast a demon out of her daughter. They have a terse exchange of words, and the daughter is healed after Jesus is impressed with the woman’s courageous faith. The second healing story is about a deaf-mute man who regains hearing and speech, and in spite of Jesus’ instructions, the man and his friends zealously proclaimed with joy the healing.

This text tells us God’s kingdom is not easily regulated or politely given to only a few special people. The abundance of grace, love, hope and peace overflows to all, even outsiders. The passage also expands our understanding of what faith is all about. We are instructed to stay expectant and be persistent and we will uncover overflowing grace and healing.

What are we to do when we experience this overflowing gift? We are to zealously tell everyone to look around and be alert to the amazing healing power of God. In verse 36, “Jesus orders the crowd to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed.” It seems that no one can keep quiet when in the presence of God, even when Jesus orders silence. Are we as vocal, giving voice to our belief in what God can do or what God has done?

These healings took place in Tyre and Sidon, places where foreigners, outsiders, lived showing that God’s Kingdom is not just where we are. The expansiveness of God’s love, God’s healing, God’s grace will not be limited by any location. It will not be regulated by the many reasons we come up with as to why God could not possibly be God.

We forget that our God became fully human not only for the sake of solidarity with the joys and pains of humanity, but also for the sake of telling us the truth about our hearts and minds; which always attempt to curtail God’s power and grace and love. In Jesus’ response to this grieving mother, we see our own inclinations to restrict God’s intent to restore life to all. In Jesus’ resistance to the woman’s begging for her daughter’s life, we view our own opposition to just how far God is willing to go so that all experience resurrected life.

We need to be reminded God really is beyond our imagination, and God’s love extends beyond our vision. We tend to limit what God can do and quickly retreat from zealous proclamation and settle for lukewarm confession.

This text challenges our commitment to give witness to the vastness of God’s vision, the immensity of God’s mission, even when we think Jesus orders us not to. After all, we do know just how deeply God loves the whole world. And that is exactly what the world needs to hear.

Are we willing to follow Jesus to Tyre and Sidon? Are we willing to admit how much like Jesus we really are, needing the persistence of the outsider, the tenacity of the minority to remind us of what God came to do in Christ: To heal, to redeem, to transform, to forgive, and to love all of creation, including each and every person on Earth!

Think about it – Pray about it – Live it

Bob