

Title: TWO HEALINGS, MARK 7:24-37
(Chatham, NJ; 09/09/12, AM) [D – Narrative Analysis]

Theme: Jesus heals two people while on the outskirts of Israel's territory and in so doing tells us just how much he cares for individuals.

Purpose: To explain Jesus' actions with this foreign woman and to demonstrate that Jesus could and did care about the lives of individuals.

Introduction:

1. Mark has moved from a discussion of defilement to Jesus' healing power.
2. Jesus' treatment of the Phoenician woman is perplexing.
3. How about the deaf man? Jesus heals him in a very unusual way: not just by a simple word or gesture.
4. What are we to make of these? (Nobody said understanding Jesus was easy.)

I. Details and questions raised by these healings (Mark 7:24-37 & Matthew 15:21-28)

A. Jesus snubs the Phoenician woman

1. Matthew calls her a Canaanite
2. When she begs for mercy in Matthew's account, he ignores her!!
3. This seems callous; he tells her that she has no right to "eat at the table."
4. It is also unlike his encounter with the Centurion in Mt. 8:5-13 whose great faith was better than what he had found among his own people
5. Furthermore, he noted that Elijah and Elisha had given comfort and healing to foreigners, Luke 4:25-27
6. Not only that but he had just finished challenging the Pharisees that they were far from God in their hearts; they didn't seem worthy of being God's children
7. Why do something out of character here?

B. The healing of a deaf man, 31-37

1. People wanted Jesus to lay his hand on the deaf man, 32
2. This suggests they knew of his power: he had been in the Decapolis before (the demon-possessed man went back there after he had been healed, Mark 5:20)
3. Jesus takes the man privately, puts his fingers in his ears, spits (!), and utters an Aramaic phrase in order to effect the healing
4. Why not just say a word or lay his hand on the man or let him touch his garment?
5. We don't have certain answers, but we can make some observations
6. We don't know the mind of Christ or of Mark in arranging the material, but we can learn a few things here anyway

II. Observations

A. The woman and her daughter

1. It must be admitted that we don't know Jesus' motivation or his intention
2. Some say this was a lesson for the Apostles: he intentionally snubs her to make a point of her great faith (he is in Gentile territory)
3. Perhaps he was testing her faith; she already believed he could heal
4. The point about who gets fed first is significant; both accounts mention it
5. The theological priority of Israel takes center stage (as it did when he talked with the Samaritan woman, John 4:22, "salvation is from the Jews")
6. Does Mark put this here to demonstrate Jesus' theological orthodoxy—especially after his criticism of the traditions of the Pharisees?
7. Perhaps, but we don't even know why he is in Tyre and Sidon in the first place

8. Though I still can't explain why he is so rude to her, this is an observation I can make that is consistent with his work: Jesus is first and foremost the Messiah to the Jews; if he isn't their Messiah he isn't our Christ

B. The healing of the deaf man

1. He leaves Sidon but goes to another area on the edge of Israel's border: the Decapolis (he healed the demoniac Legion there in ch. 5)
2. Not sure why he takes the man privately; he counsels him and others to speak of this to no one; of course they can't keep quiet about it (36, 37)
3. But he has said this before and in Matthew great crowds gathered for healing
4. Perhaps Mt. 15:31 is the key, "They glorified the God of Israel."
5. In both miracles, people are pointed to Israel and thus to Israel's God
6. The Messiah will come from Israel; her God is the one true God that deserves praise and glory; only he can heal

III. What Else We Learn

A. Jesus is intensely personal

1. One of the occasions is disruptive, the other is literally quiet, but Jesus takes the time for each one.
2. Mark tells us two stories of individuals; the focus is on them
3. Jesus allowed the woman to speak directly to him
4. Whereas Matthew 15 tells of lots of people coming to Jesus for healing, Mark focuses on one deaf man whom Jesus takes to a private place
5. How do you feel when your doctor gives you all the time you need?

B. Bill Bennett on education (former Secretary of Education)

1. Two main ideas are evident in current research
2. One, decentralize – give more choice to the parents where the student should go
3. Second, there are two most important people in the life of a student: the first is the parent (see note 1), and the second is a competent teacher (note 2)
4. Parents and competent teachers: one gives undivided attention to their child, the other provides good learning
5. If they have the choice where to send their children, won't they go where the competency level has demonstrated that learning takes place?

C. The best access to the best medical care

1. An editorial in *World Magazine*, "Fatal Decisions"
2. Fifteen people under the government-funded health plan will determine what can be paid for and what won't
3. Do you think you'll have access to any one of those bureaucrats holed up in some office building?
4. Do you want them telling you that they won't pay for your treatments or medications because they are too expensive?
5. Is this really any different than you thinking the insurance companies are callous and uncaring?
6. Shouldn't that decision be made locally by the ones closest to the situation? (*)

Conclusions:

1. Jesus is the Messiah for everyone.
2. He came to a group, but he ministered to everyone.
3. The God of Israel is the sovereign ruler; let no one else tell you what is right and wrong.
4. Believe the Gospel today; Jesus cares about you the individual.