

***Worship Alive Plus!***

**Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Series B**

***Worship Alive Plus!*** Is designed to be adaptable in planning

Contemporary, blended, and “fresh traditional” worship.

The Scripture readings are the assigned readings for the day taken from the

Revised Common Lectionary @ Augsburg Publishing House

The Liturgy and *Sermon Starters & Seasonings* are written by the writers of

Worship Alive Plus! @ WorshipOutlet

**Theme – “Faith Exercises” Mark 7:24-37**

When hard pressed on all sides, do you ever wonder what you are doing wrong? Where did things get off track? Do you try to do more ‘reps’ of the right thing? Or do you look at the Father for who He is and what He can do? Today, we get to peek into the life of two different souls, a desperate Gentile mother and a deaf man we assume is Jewish. Both from different backgrounds, both precious in Jesus sight, and both in deep need of immediate healing. As you listen, focus on what each did in the midst of their trying circumstances. In times of great distress may we see our circumstances as opportunities to boldly exercise our faith in Him.

 **✝ We Lift Our Hearts in Worship ✝**

[Preservice options include video countdowns, worship song videos, welcomes), CDs, or live music.]

**Welcome & Time of Greeting**

**Time of Praise and Worship**

**The Lord Our God**

Jason Ingram | Kristian Stanfill, © 2013 sixsteps Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing), worshiptogether.com songs (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) Open Hands Music (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC), So Essential Tunes (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC)

**Oceans (Where Feet May Fall)**

Joel Houston | Matt Crocker | Salomon Ligthelm, ©2012 Hillsong Music Publishing (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing)

**What Faith Can Do**

Scott Davis & Scott Krippayne, ©2008 Word Music, LLC (a div. of Word Music Group, Inc.) Life Of Rhyme Music Publishing (Admin. by Word Music Group, Inc.) Pirk Music

**[Traditional Options]**

**I Love Your Kingdom, Lord**

BH 75 240; BH 91 354; CH 405; EH 524; HWC 280; HFG 545; HLC 203; HGP 168; HSP 189; LBW 368; LSB 651; LW 296; NCH 312; PH 441; RH 330; WC 702; UMH 540; WAR 549; WHM 349; WIS 311

**Christ Is Our Cornerstone**

LSB 917; LW 290

**Lord, Speak to Me, that We May Speak**

BH 75 276; BH 91 568; CH 667; ELW 676; HWC 450; HFG 625; HLC 378; HSP 239; LBW 403; NCH 531; PH 426; RH 520; WC 574; UMH 463; WAR 593; WHM 646; WIS 338

**Invocation**

Leader We gather today as God’s dearly loved chosen people.

**ALL** **In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen!**

**Opening Prayer / Theme Introduction**

Leader Faithful God, you have created each of us in Your image. No matter our situation or condition, You love us. You desire us to come to You just as we are. Father, we gather here today to worship Your Holy Name and hear from Your Word. We place our trust in You and not in our circumstances. Help us to walk in faith and love so we may reflect You well. In Jesus’ Name.

**ALL Amen!**

**Time of Confession and Forgiveness**

*[Alternate location: following Message]*

**ALL Father, we confess our unbelief. We come before You just as we are. We confess all we have to offer some days are crumbs of faith. Increase our faith in You, God. Keep us in Your perfect peace. Purify our hearts. Fill us with faith to move mountains. In Your name Jesus, we ask. Amen.**

**Pastor** Increase our faith to entrust all the cares of our hearts to you. Not one of us is more righteous than the next. You are the only perfect one. Let us look to you and not our circumstances. Father you reign Holy and we surrender our lives to you.

**ALL Amen**

**✝ We Hear God’s Word ✝**

[Read aloud both the introduction and Scripture]

**First Reading Isaiah 35:4-7**

*Redeemer God will come to save us all. We must stand firm in our faith as we wait for our King to work His divine purposes for our good. His promise to restore all things to new is our Hope in desolate and dark times. The blind will see, the deaf will hear. We must have faith in God over circumstances.*

4say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.” 5Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. 7The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

**Second Reading James 2: 1-10 [11-13] 14-18**

*God does not favor each one by outward appearance, but rather sees the heart. We are all equal heirs to God’s love and favor. Favoritism has no place in God’s Kingdom. The true measure of our faith will be shown by how we treat others.*

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” 4have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? 5Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? 8If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. 9But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. 12Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment. 14What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. 18But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

**Gospel: Mark 7:(24-30) 31-37**

*Jesus, though likely looking for some respite from crowds, continued on to the vicinity of Tyre. In our reading today, we are told of his encounter with a Gentile woman seeking healing for her demon possessed little girl and a man bringing his Jewish friend to be healed by Jesus. This woman knew her Lord, although she was Gentile, and she even called him, Lord. Both knew they could bring to Him all of their needs. The woman understood the nature and character of Jesus and His promises. We hear how each exercised faith in their requests. Seeing the woman was full of faith, Jesus brought immediate healing. The woman’s faith had been rewarded. Each were given equal love as each were precious in the sight of Jesus. Healing depended on Jesus not their circumstances or lot in life.*

24Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. 25In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. 26The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. 27“First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” 28“Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” 29Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.” 30She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. 31Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. 32There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him. 33After 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. 34He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, *“Ephphatha!”* (which means “Be opened!”). 35At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak plainly. 36Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. 37People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

**Response Songs**

*[Alternate location: following Message]*

**Give Me Faith**

[Chris Brown](https://us.songselect.com/search/author?Authors=4294909606&Sorting=Popularity), [London Gatch](https://us.songselect.com/search/author?Authors=4294865690&Sorting=Popularity), [Mack Brock](https://us.songselect.com/search/author?Authors=4294892783&Sorting=Popularity) & [Wade Joye](https://us.songselect.com/search/author?Authors=4294881474&Sorting=Popularity), © 2009 Sony/ATV Tree Publishing (Admin. by Sony/ATV Music Publishing)

##### Break Every Chain

Will Reagon, © 2009 United Pursuit Music

##### Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Thomas Chisholm & William Runyan, ©1951 Hope Publishing Company

**[Traditional Options]**

**Great Is Thy Faithfulness**

BH 75 216; BH 91 54; CH 139; CHH 86; ELW 733; HS 98 889; HWC 43; HPW 14; HFG 98; HLC 37; HGP 12; LSB 809; NCH 423; PH 276; RH 8; STTL 44; WC 80; UMH 140; WOV 771; WAR 72; WHM 519; WIS 86

**The Church’s One Foundation**

BH 75 236; BH 91 350; CH 401; CHH 272; EH 525; ELW 654; HWC 277; HFG 547; HLC 200; HGP 184; HS 116; LBW 369; LSB 644; LW 289; NCH 366; PH 442; RH 340; STTL 668; WC 689; UMH 545; WAR 544; WHM 331; WIS 304

**Blest Be The Tie That Binds**

BH75 256; BH 91 387; CH 426; CHH 433; ELW 656; HWC 286; HFG 560; HLC 207; HGP 169; HSP 130; LBW 370; LSB 649; 975; LW 295; NCH 393; PH 438; RH 342; STTL 677; WC 708; UMH 557; WHM 337; WIS 307

**Message**

**“Faith Exercises”**

*“Sermon Seasonings” provided at the end of this service*

**✝ We Respond to God’s Word ✝**

[Optional location for Confession/Absolution]

**Affirmation of Faith**

I believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God the Father has created me and all things. He cares for all my needs today and every day.

He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be born of the Virgin Mary, to suffer under Pointus Pilot, and to die as man even though He is fully God.

On the third day, He rose from the dead, forever destroying the power of death and the Devil for me and all others Baptized into the faith.

The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son and is sent as the helper, Lord working in the hearts of the church on Earth. By His power, I am brought into the one Holy Apostolic Church and can confess these truths today.

On the final day, I will be gathered with all the saints to new and eternal life in Heaven where I will remain forever praising the Lord God Almighty for He is Holy Holy Holy. Amen

*[Alternate Suggestions]*

**We Believe**

Matthew Hooper, Richie Fike, & Travis Ryan, © Abundant Life Ministries UK (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing (IMI)) Integrity Worship Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing (IMI)) Integrity's Praise! Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing (IMI)) Travis Ryan Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing (IMI))

**This I Believe (The Creed)** *Ben Fielding & Matt Crocker, ©2014 Hillsong Music Publishing (Admin by Capitol CMG Publishing)*

***-OR-***

*Speak the historic* **Apostles’ Creed***or***Nicene Creed**

**Offerings**

*[Choose an unused song from elsewhere in the service, or program Special Music by worship team, choir, or soloist]*

**✝ We Pray ✝**

**Prayers**

*[Worshipers appreciate the sincerity of informal, heartfelt prayer, in a simple prayer language they can use in daily life. These starters are offered to help facilitate spontaneity.]*

**Prayer Topic Starters**

* Gratitude for the Lord’s blessings
* Wisdom in dealing with challenges at work and home
* God would draw us near to His heart
* Faith to draw near to God’s heart to receive help in our great time of need
* Our eyes would stay fixed on the Healer not the healing
* We would be bold in our prayers
* For those in dark places to be given renewed hope and increased faith and to believe
* For a Spirit of truth and grace to fill our hearts, homes, and church
* For a God’s Spirit of unity and reconciliation to be alive in each heart

**The Lord’s Prayer**

*[Consider singing the Lord’s Prayer on occasion, a capella or with accompaniment]*

**Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

 **For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

*[A Communion option is provided for churches celebrating the Lord’s Supper]*

**✝ We Celebrate the Lord’s Supper ✝**

*Here our Lord gives to us His own Body and Blood for the forgiveness of all our sins.*

**We Prepare**

 *Blessed… For our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night He was betrayed, took bread…*

Jesus, some today are broken from loss, some tormented with anger or guilt, and some of us doubting you will see us through another trial. Lord, you can take what crumbs we have to offer and use even a mustard seed to work miracles.

*Pastor We gather around the Lord’s Holy table.*

**ALL** **We receive the bread and the cup as we come to the Lord’s table**

*Pastor Lord bless us through this holy meal.*

 *Let us eat from the bread of Heaven and drink from your Cup*

 *We receive this Sacrifice of Love poured out for us*

 *We receive with humbled and grateful hearts*

 *We offer back to you full surrender of our lives*

**ALL** **Let us praise the Lord for the work He has done, Amen!**

**Words of Institution**

**Music During Communion**

**I Surrender All**

Judson Wheeler Van DeVenter & Winfield Scott Weeden, Public Domain

**Gracefully Broken**

Bryan Torwalt, Jonas Myrin, KatieTorwalt, Matt Redman & Tasha Cobbs, © 2016 Capitol CMG GenesisCapitol CMG ParagonJesus Culture MusicJesus Culture Music GroupMeadowgreen Music CompanySaid And Done Musicsixsteps MusicSon of the LionTasha Cobbs Music GroupThankyou Musicworshiptogether.com songs

**By Faith**

Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty, Stuart Townend
2009 Thankyou Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing) Keith & Kristyn Getty

(Admin. by Gettymusic).

**[Traditional Options]**

**I Surrender All**

BH 75 347; BH 91 275; CH 596; HWC 366; HPW 42; HFG 408; HLC 373; HGP 362; HSP 275; RH 483; STTL 486; WC 579; UMH 354; WAR 474; WHM 404; WIS 287

**Praise and Thanksgiving**

BH 91 645; ELW 689; LBW 409; LSB 789; LW 403; WAR 722

**It Is Well With My Soul**

BH 75 339; BH 91 410; CH 705; CHH 571; ELW 785; HWC 493; HPW 55; HFG 495; HLC 401; HGP 316; HSP 131; LBW 346; LSB 763; NCH 438; RH 433; STTL 554; WC 519; UMH 377; WHM 524; WIS 70

**Dismissal Blessing**

*Pastor Jesus may your face shine upon us as we go into the world and proclaim your Name. May our lives reflect your image in all we say, think, and do. Help us exercise our faith in new ways today.*

 **All Amen!**

**✝ We Depart in Peace ✝**

**Benediction**

*Pastor We go now…in peace. With the Holy Spirit guiding our steps and the glory of the Lord lighting our paths, we are protected by His power and grace.*

 **All Amen!**

**Closing Song**

**This We Know**

Jason Ingram, Kristian Stanfill, sixsteps Music, worshiptogether.com songs (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing), Open Hands Music, So Essential Tunes (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC)

**God You’re So Good**

Brett Younker, Kristian Stanfill, Brooke Ligertwood, Scott Ligertwood, ©2018 sixsteps Music, worshiptogether.Com Songs, SHOUT! Music Publishing (Admin by Capitol CMG Publishing)

**[Traditional Options]**

**Lord Jesus Christ, The Church’s Head**

LSB 647; LW 293

**Lord Keep Us Steadfast In Your Word**

ELW 517; LBW 230; LSB 655; LW 230

**Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me**

ELW 755; HLC 446; HGP 374; LBW 334; LSB 715; LW 513; NCH 441; RH 605; UMH 509; WHM 402; WIS 482

***SSS* – *S*ERMON *S*TARTERS & *S*EASONINGS**

*These ideas are intended to provide material and stimulus for your own creativity*

**Faith Exercises**

***Mark 7:24-37***

*When hard pressed on all sides, do you ever wonder what* **you** *are doing wrong? Where did things get off? Do you try to do more ‘reps’ of the right thing? Or do you look at the Father for who He is and what He can do? Today, we get to peek into the life of two different souls, a desperate Gentile mother and a deaf man we assume is Jewish. Both from different backgrounds, both precious in Jesus sight and both in deep need of immediate healing. As you listen, focus on what each did in the midst of their trying circumstances. In times of great distress may we see our circumstances as opportunities to boldly exercise our faith in Him.*

**Theological Reflections and Practical Applications**

### MARK 7:24-30. HE WENT AWAY TO TYRE AND SIDON

24From there he arose and went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. He entered into a house, and didn’t want anyone to know it, but he couldn’t escape notice. 25For a woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came and fell down at his feet. 26Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by race. She begged him that he would cast the demon out of her daughter. 27But Jesus said to her, “Let the children be filled first, for it is not appropriate to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs” (Greek: kynariois). 28But she answered him, “Yes, Lord (kurie—sir or Lord). Yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” 29He said to her, “For this saying, go your way. The demon has gone out of your daughter.” 30She went away to her house and found the child having been laid on the bed, with the demon gone out.

“From there he arose and went away into the borders of Tyre” (v. 24a). This is Gentile country. The region of Tyre and Sidon was the home of Jezebel, Elijah’s enemy (1 Kings 16:31). It inspired the ire of the prophets (Ezekiel 26:15-17; Zechariah 9:3). It is remarkable that Jesus would visit such a place—except that he came to break down the barriers that divide people. He came to save people—not to exclude them.

“He entered into a house and didn’t want anyone to know it” (v. 24b). Given the character of this story, the house seems likely to be a Jewish home. Jesus’ purpose for visiting this area is unclear. Verse 24 makes it sound as if he is looking for solitude from the crowds that have pursued him in his Galilean ministry. Perhaps he simply wants time alone with the disciples.

In verse 19, Jesus said that food can’t defile people, because food is soon eliminated without ever penetrating the heart. Thus, he declared all foods–and all people clean. (Williamson, 137; Brooks, 120).

When Mark wrote this Gospel (65-70 A.D.), the church included many Gentiles. The fact that Mark must explain Jewish customs (7:3-4; 7:11, 19) suggests that his readership is predominantly Gentile. By Mark’s time, the church has gone through considerable struggles to determine its right relationship to Gentiles. This story of Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman reflects that struggle in its earliest moments. It avoids pronouncing the ascendancy of either Jews or Gentiles (Boring 213).

“Yet he couldn’t escape notice” (v. 24c). In both this story and the next, Jesus’ efforts to maintain a low profile are frustrated. Just as the sun cannot be hidden in the sky, neither can the Son be hidden on the earth.

“For a woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by race” (vv. 25-26). Mark double-emphasizes that this woman who lives in Gentile territory is herself a Gentile—a Syrophoenician Gentile, no less—a Gentile of this abominable Gentile area. “She begged him that he would cast the demon out of her daughter” (v. 26).

Phoenicia is a long narrow coastal strip bounded by the Mediterranean Sea on the west and mountains on the east—the coastal plain of modern-day Lebanon. Its southern boundary is Mount Carmel (due east of the Sea of Galilee), and it extends approximately 185 miles (300 km) north from there. Major cities include Ptolemais, Tyre, and Sidon. “Syrophoenician” links this woman with Syria and Phoenicia.

We are shocked at Jesus’ response. “Let the children be filled first, for it is not appropriate to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs” (kynariois) (v. 27). This is one of the most troubling verses in the New Testament. The mother is asking healing, not for herself, but for her daughter. It must be difficult for a Gentile woman to ask a Jewish man for help, but her need is overwhelming. She comes in faith as a deferential supplicant—what more could Jesus ask? As it turns out, he could ask that she be Jewish— “Let the children be filled first, for it is not appropriate to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

Some scholars try to soften Jesus’ words, suggesting that this is a well-known proverb that would not sound so harsh in context—or that the diminutive, kynariois, refers to household pets, implying an affectionate tone. However, it seems inappropriate to try to domesticate Jesus’ words. We cannot validate this saying as a common proverb, and it is a cutting remark even if it refers to household pets. Most Biblical references to dogs are negative (see Exodus 22:31; 1 Samuel 24:14; 2 Samuel 16:9; 1 Kings 21:23; 22:38; 2 Kings 9:36; Isaiah 56:10; Matthew 7:6; Luke 16:21; Philippians 3:2).

R.T. France gives a refreshing perspective with regard to this problem. He says that Jesus is functioning as a devil’s advocate, and not disappointed with the woman’s strong rejoinder (France, 296). (A devil’s advocate is “a person who expresses a contentious opinion in order to provoke debate or test the strength of the opposing arguments”—Oxford Dictionary)

The scriptures are clear that Jesus knows people’s hearts and responds accordingly. A rich man comes asking what he must do to gain eternal life, and Jesus, knowing how the man loves money, says, “One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me, taking up the cross” (Mark 10:21). There are other accounts like this in the New Testament—accounts where Jesus knows people’s hearts and responds accordingly (see 12:15). If that is true, Jesus surely knows this mother’s heart too—and knows that she will not buckle if he presses her a bit. He does so to give her the opportunity to win her case.

Jesus clearly feels it necessary to focus his mission on the Jews. While he has occasionally visited the Gentile shore of the Sea Galilee (the eastern shore), this visit to a place with a significant pagan history is unusual. The time will come when Gentiles will be welcome in the church, but the time is not yet.

As Paul said in his letter to the Romans (written earlier than Mark’s Gospel), “for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16). There is a natural order in every good endeavor. A builder must lay a solid foundation before erecting walls and roof. So, it is that Jesus limits his ministry to Gentiles in deference to the people whom God chose so many centuries prior. Ministry to Gentiles will come in good time.

“But she answered him, ‘Yes, Lord (kurie—sir or Lord). Yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs'” (v. 28). In this Gospel, on several occasions Jesus refers to himself as Lord (2:28; 5:19; 11:3; 12:36), but this is the only place where another person calls him “Lord.” It is ironic that the person calling him “Lord” is a Gentile woman rather than one of his disciples.

The woman answers well, acknowledging the special place of the Jews, calling attention to her own need, and using Jesus’ words to press her plea. The kynarion—pets indeed—are part of the household and are under the master’s care. The woman uses the image of children carelessly (or perhaps purposely) dropping bits of food on the floor. What harm will come from allowing the kynarion to partake of the scraps that will not be eaten by the children in any event? What harm will come of Gentiles participating in the bounty of the messianic banquet?

“He said to her, ‘For this saying, go your way. The demon has gone out of your daughter'” (v. 29). Note that:

• Jesus does not accompany her to her home. He does not touch the child. He does not issue a healing command. He simply reports a healing that has already taken place. The emphasis in this story is not on the healing but on Jesus’ relationship to Gentiles.

• In Matthew’s account, Jesus commends the woman’s faith (Matthew 15:28), but here he commends her good answer.

“She went away to her house and found the child having been laid on the bed, with the demon gone out” (v. 30). The woman does not plead for Jesus to come to visit her daughter. She first expressed a simple but profound faith by coming to Jesus, and she now expresses a simple but profound faith by departing. Her faith is much like that of the Roman centurion (Matthew 5:5-13; Luke 7:1-10)—also a Gentile. Arriving at her home, she finds the demon gone and the child well.

This woman serves as an example of persistent prayer that refuses to be discouraged when prayer is not immediately answered. She provides us with a model for engaging God fully and passionately in prayer rather than simply reciting rote prayers or a laundry list of our needs. Not every fervent prayer will be answered as we ask, but God honors fervor and has little regard for half-hearted, lukewarm prayer (Revelation 3:16). The archetypal model of fervent prayer is Jacob wrestling with God at Peniel until he received a blessing (Genesis 32:22-32).

This woman also serves as a model of a parent who loves her child enough to take an active role in the child’s life. She could have found excuses for not going to Jesus, but she went. She could have allowed herself to be discouraged at Jesus’ initial response, but she persisted. Her daughter’s life was at stake, and she wasn’t about to accept defeat.

There are two ways that parents can go wrong here. One is to become a “helicopter parent,” hovering too closely—advocating excessively for their child—intervening too quickly to resolve conflicts for the child. Helicopter parents are a particular problem in little league sports—and school officials see far too many of them. Studies show that the children of helicopter parents don’t function as well as children of parents who allow their children to work out their own children’s issues.

But the opposite problem is failing to provide appropriate guidance and support. Many parents today are content to practice laissez faire parenting, and the results are often disastrous. The church needs to call parents to take an active role in guiding their children. Just as the inattentive gardener begets weeds, so do inattentive parents beget troubled children.

The woman also provides a stark contrast to the scribes and Pharisees who challenged Jesus in the preceding story (7:1-23). They know what the prophets said about the coming messiah. They have seen (or at least heard about) the Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:30-44) and the healing of the sick in Gennesaret (6:53-56), but they chose to find fault with Jesus and his disciples (7:1-23). In other words, given every opportunity to see through the eyes of faith, they have chosen to see through the eyes of unfaith. This woman, a Gentile, chooses to see through the eyes of faith.

### MARK 7:31-35. THE DEAF AND MUTE MAN

31Again he departed from the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and came to the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the region of Decapolis. 32They brought to him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech (Greek: mogilalon). They begged him to lay his hand on him.33He took him aside from the multitude, privately, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue. 34Looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, “Ephphatha!” that is, “Be opened!” 35Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was released (Greek: kai eluthe ho desmos tes glosses—and was loosened the bond of the tongue), and he spoke clearly.

“Again, he departed from the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and came to the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the region of Decapolis” (v. 31). This itinerary seems odd. Sidon is north of Tyre and the Sea of Galilee is southeast, so Jesus goes out of his way to visit Sidon. Some scholars suggest that Mark is unfamiliar with the geography of this area, but it seems more likely that Jesus simply decides to visit Sidon before leaving the area.

The word Decapolis comes from two Greek words (deka and polis) that mean “ten cities”—although more than ten cities were members over time. Most member cities were located south and east of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River, but Damascus (located 60 miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee) is a member city. The Decapolis is not only these cities but also the region in which they are located. The population of the region is primarily Gentile, but there are Jews living there as well.

These cities were established by Greeks, and the Jews resented this Gentile presence on their border—a resentment that sometimes broke into open warfare. The Greeks responded by devising a loose confederation of cities to provide for the common defense, not only against Jewish incursions, but also against desert marauders.

The Romans encouraged the growth of Greek culture in the Decapolis as a way of limiting Jewish influence in the region.

The mention of the Decapolis in verse 31 is significant because it shows that Jesus is choosing to stay in Gentile territory rather than to return to the more familiar nearby cities of Galilee.

“They brought to him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. They begged him to lay his hand on him” (v. 32). This is reminiscent of the healing of the paralytic, whose friends brought him to Jesus (2:1-12). We know very little about this man or his friends. Some reliable scholars think of them as Gentiles (Edwards, 226-227), but it seems possible that they are Jewish. Given Mark’s care to label the Syrophoenician woman as Gentile (v. 26), it would seem that he would do the same here if the man were not Jewish. Also, the laying on of hands is a Jewish healing practice, and the request that Jesus perform this act (v. 32) may indicate that the man’s friends are Jewish. However, there is no mention of faith on the part of the friends or the deaf man.

Deaf people commonly have difficulty speaking clearly, because they cannot hear how words sound. The man has “an impediment in his speech,” which might indicate that he was not deaf from birth but that he learned some speech (however imperfectly) before becoming deaf.

There is a significant parallel between the deaf man and Jesus’ disciples. The man can neither hear nor speak properly. The disciples cannot understand what Jesus is telling them and are thus hampered in their proclamation. They, too, need Jesus’ touch so that they might see, hear, and understand.

We, too, need Jesus’ touch so that we might understand. Just as Jesus’ first disciples failed to understand and to proclaim him faithfully, the church today often experiences the same failings:

• Preachers are tempted to proclaim a Prosperity Gospel (“Believe and Grow Rich!”) instead of challenging people to take up their cross and follow Jesus. Not only is the Prosperity Gospel is an easier “sell” than the cross (at least in some quarters), but preachers are more likely to grow rich by preaching it.

• The church too easily tolerates divisions within its midst—racial, gender, national, denominational, and socio-economic—because crossing these dividing lines makes us so uncomfortable. We find it far easier to stay with our own kind than to reach out to those who are different. However, Jesus’ visit to the Decapolis demonstrates his commitment to those who are different and calls us to share that commitment.

• The scriptures call us to worship God—to give God glory—but our worship agenda is too often “what we get out of it”—God serving us rather than us serving God.

• In these and a thousand other ways, we demonstrate our own blindness and deafness. We, too, need Christ’s healing touch.

Jesus “took him aside from the multitude, privately” (v. 33a). We don’t know why Jesus takes the man aside for healing. Perhaps Jesus’ action is related to his desire in the previous story to keep his presence secret (v. 24).

“and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue” (v. 33b). This healing is very different from that of the woman’s daughter. In that story, Jesus took no action other than to report the healing to the mother (v. 29). If Jesus seemed too-little-engaged in that instance, he seems too-much-engaged in this one. He puts his fingers into the man’s ears. He spits and touches the man’s tongue. These are common healing procedures. If we were offended by Jesus’ sharp words to the woman (v. 27), now we are offended by the fingers in the ears and the spittle on the tongue. If Jesus could heal the woman’s daughter without even a word, why does he not do the same for this man?

“Looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, ‘Ephphatha!’ that is, ‘Be opened'” (v. 34). Looking to heaven demonstrates Jesus’ dependency on the Father. His sigh demonstrates his sympathy and compassion. “Ephphatha” is an Aramaic word, which Mark translates for his Gentile readers— “Be opened.”

“Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was released” (Greek: eluthe ho desmos tes glosses—was loosened the bond of the tongue) (v. 35) The image is that of a man whose tongue was in bondage—literally tongue-tied—and whose tongue, at Jesus’ command, finds freedom of movement and expression.

While Jesus puts his fingers in the man’s ears and touches his tongue, it is only when Jesus utters his authoritative word that the man’s tongue is loosened (Guelich, 395).

### MARK 7:36-37. THEY WERE ASTONISHED BEYOND MEASURE

36He commanded them that they should tell no one, but the more he commanded them, so much the more widely they proclaimed (Greek: ekerusson—from kerusso—a word related to kerygma, which is the preaching of the Gospel by the early church) it. 37They were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He makes even the deaf hear, and the mute speak!”

“He commanded them that they should tell no one” (v. 36a). The irony is that the deaf/mute man can now speak clearly, but Jesus forbids him and his friends to speak of this miracle—the most important thing that has ever happened to him.

Jesus has commanded silence in several earlier instances—of unclean spirits (1:25, 34; 3:12)—of a leper (1:44)—and of the little girl’s parents (5:43). Why would this be?

• When Jesus’ mother pushed him to solve the wine problem at Cana of Galilee, Jesus responded, “My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4). The timing was not yet right for Jesus to reveal his Godly power. That would be especially true in this overtly Gentile and pagan land.

• A successful exorcism might draw crowds of petitioners and curiosity seekers who would take Jesus’ ministry in a direction that he did not want to go.

• Or it could be that Jesus models his ministry on the Servant motif found in Isaiah 49:1-6, where God acts through concealment and hiddenness.

“but the more he commanded them, so much the more widely they proclaimed (ekerusson—from kerusso) it” (v. 36b). The word kerusso (proclaim) is related to the word kerygma, which is the preaching of the Gospel by the early church

Just as in the previous story (v. 24), Jesus will not be permitted anonymity or privacy. However, Mark gives no hint that the crowd’s kerygma—their proclamation—is bad (v. 36). Instead he portrays them as “astounded beyond measure” (v. 37).

“They were astonished beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done all things well'” (v. 37a). Their proclamation, “he has done everything well” (v. 37), hearkens back to Genesis 1:31: “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.”

Their assessment, “he makes even the deaf hear, and the mute speak” (v. 37b), alludes to Isaiah 35:5-6a: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.” This allusion is strengthened by the use of the word mogilalos (speech impediment) in v. 32. This word is used only twice in the Bible—here and in Isaiah 35:6 (LXX—the Septuagint or Greek version of the Old Testament).

The Isaiah passage looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, and the crowd’s proclamation in verse 37 reveals Jesus as the Messiah. In the next chapter, Peter will confess Jesus as Messiah (8:27-30), but the crowd (perhaps without fully realizing the significance of their proclamation) has already beaten him to it.

SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS are from the World English Bible (WEB), a public domain (no copyright) modern English translation of the Holy Bible. The World English Bible is based on the American Standard Version (ASV) of the Bible, the Biblia Hebraica Stutgartensa Old Testament, and the Greek Majority Text New Testament. The ASV, which is also in the public domain due to expired copyrights, was a very good translation, but included many archaic words (hast, shineth, etc.), which the WEB has updated

***Source: Sermon Writer*** [**https://www.sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary/mark-724-37/**](https://www.sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary/mark-724-37/)

**Quotations**

*The work of healing is not my work, but by faith, healing is done. The work of deliverance, great and mighty deliverance, is not my work but is my faith in Him. It is not the works of righteousness which I have done, but according to His grace. I am a product of His grace.*

***T.B. Joshua***

*One problem I have with faith-healing is that it tends to be focused only on the physical aspect of healing. But Jesus always backed away when people came to him only to get their physical needs met. My goodness, he was ready to have you lop off your hand! His real interest was in healing the soul.*

***Jonie Eareckson Tada***

*Grow in the root of all grace, which is faith. Believe in God’s promises more firmly than ever. Allow your faith to increase in its fullness, firmness, and simplicity.*

***Charles Spurgeon***

*The essence of faith is being satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus.*

***John Piper***

*Without the doctrine of justification by faith alone, the gospel is not merely compromised, it’s lost altogether.* ***R.C. Sproul***

*Our faith isn’t based on what we see. Our faith is based on who God is.* ***Craig Groeschel***

*God’s part is to put forth power; our part is to put forth faith.* ***Andrew A. Bonar***

**Illustrations**

I used to work at a city church, but its members came from the surrounding suburbs. The area around the church was very poor, but the people in the pews were well off. One day Zack, a kid from the neighborhood, decided to come to youth group. He was living with his grandma for the summer and she wanted him to meet some kids his age, so she sent him to the church down the street. Zack was a little different than the rest of the kids in the group: his clothes weren’t as nice, his ears were pierced, he had a tough exterior. Beyond all of that, he was a really nice guy, trying to make the most of his summer away from home. The next day I got a call from one of the parents of a youth who was at the event the previous night. She wanted me to know that she was uncomfortable with neighborhood kids like Zack being a part of our youth group. She didn’t want him to be a bad influence on her kid nor on the rest of the kids in the group. This concerned parent let her fear and her prejudice get in the way of Zack being accepted into the church. Her fears and labels prevented Zack from being influenced by her kid and being affected by the love of a group of Christian teens. Instead of following our hearts, instead of helping those in need, participating in ministry that speak to our passion, gifts and interests, we let our apprehensions, our lack of comfort, and our bias guide our decisions. When we hear our same prejudices come from the lips of Jesus’ mouth we are deeply disturbed, because we recognize them as being wrong and unloving. We know that when confronted with a plea such as the mother’s plea for her daughter we should not respond with the labels of children and dogs. We know the loving response is to meet that need as best we can. But she responded to those labels by saying, “Lord, even the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs.” “Good Answer!” Jesus said. “Go on home. The demon has already left your daughter.” The labels no longer matter when we come to feast at the Lord’s Table. Neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, rich nor poor, gay nor straight, prejudiced nor loving, liberal nor conservative, will be left hungry. That is the beauty of the Gospel. As though to prove the point that none are excluded, that God is big enough to love us all, Jesus goes on to heal a deaf man.

***Sermon to Go, Mandy McNeil,*** <http://www.nardinpark.org/wp-content/uploads/sermons/09-09-12.pdf>

Look for the Syrophoenician woman in the back row of church this Sunday. Maybe she's the one whose reputation discourages her from getting involved or the one who slips out during the last hymn to avoid having to mix with the churchy 'insiders.' But she keeps coming back, fiercely convinced that if anything you preach week-in and week-out is true, then it's got to be true for her, too."

[Commentary](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?lect_date=9/9/2012&tab=4), Mark 7:24-37, Matt Skinner, Preaching This Week, *WorkingPreacher.org*, 2012.

"A few months ago, on my morning walk I was surprised by 'crumbs' left behind. They were not meant for me at all. I even knew they were not meant for me, but left over, they fed me still."

["Of Sidewalk Messages and Crumbs from God's Table,"](http://words.dancingwiththeword.com/2012/09/of-sidewalk-messages-and-crumbs-from.html) Janet Hunt, Dancing with the Word, 2012.

"The man did not get Jesus' point, as most people today do not get his point. They look for sensational phenomena, like the curing of the physically deaf, and fail to appreciate or recognize relational and spiritual deafness."

["The Deeper Deafness,"](http://www.bible.claret.org/liturgy/daily/sundays_pierse/cycleB/B_23rdSunOT.htm) Ordinary 23B, Fr. Gerry Pierse, C.Ss.R., from Sundays Into Silence: Reflections on the Sunday Gospels in the Light of Christian Meditation. Claretian Publications.

**Video Resources**

<https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/16929/faith>

<https://www.godvine.com/walking-by-faith---inspirational-videos-9333.html>

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[**www.PraiseCharts.com**](http://www.praisecharts.com)

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[**www.WeAreWorship.com**](http://www.weareworship.com)

[**www.WordMusic.com**](http://www.wordmusic.com)

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[**www.itunes.com**](http://www.itunes.com)

[**www.LeadWorship.com**](http://www.leadworship.com)

[**www.LifewayWorship.com**](http://www.lifewayworship.com)

[**www.PraiseCharts.com**](http://www.praisecharts.com)

[**www.WorshipTeam.com**](http://www.worshipteam.com)

[**www.WorshipTogether.com**](http://www.worshiptogether.com)

[**www.YouTube.com**](http://www.youtube.com)

**HYMNAL CODES**

**BH75** Baptist Hymnal *(1975)*

**BH91** Baptist Hymnal *(1991)*

**CH** Celebration Hymnal *(Word)*

**CHH** Chalice Hymnal *(Chalice)*

**EH** Episcopal Hymnal *(1982)*

**ELW** Evangelical Lutheran Worship *(Augsburg)*

**HPW** Hymns for Praise and Worship *(Word)*

**HFG** Hymns for the Family of God *(Paragon)*

**HLC** Hymns for the Living Church *(Hope)*

**HGP** Hymns of Glorious Praise *(Gospel Pub House)*

**HSP** Hymns of the Spirit *(Pathway)*

**HS98** Hymnal Supplement 1998 *(Concordia)*

**HWC**Hymnal for Worship & Celebration *(Word)*

**LBW** Lutheran Book of Worship *(Augsburg)*

**LSB** Lutheran Service Book *(Concordia)*

**LW** Lutheran Worship *(Concordia)*

**NCH** New Century Hymnal *(Pilgrim Press)*

**PH** Presbyterian Hymnal *(1990)*

**RH** Rejoice Hymnal *(Tempo)*

**RS** Ritual Song *(G.I.A.)*

**STTL** Sing To The Lord *(Lillenas)*

**TFWS** The Faith We Sing *(Methodist supplement)*

**UMH** United Methodist Hymnal *(1989)*

**WC** The Worshipping Church *(Hope)*

**WOV** With One Voice *(Augsburg)*

**WAR** *Worship and Rejoice (Hope)*

**WHM** *Worship His Majesty (Gaither)*

**WIS** *Worship in Song (Lillenas)*