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September Survey: Freedom

Surveying the Bible

Why its important:

-what can very easily happen with a pastor or a church that has a certain comfort zone, is that they can get stuck preaching the same texts studying the same parts of the Bible hearing the same parts of the familiar passages that they're comfortable with, instead of branching out and exploring different parts of the Bible.

-Do you have any particular church/theology hobby horses? Any favourite passages you also read but books of the bible you haven't read in years?

-not a random survey – remember, the Bible is a unified whole prepared by the Holy Spirit to present the good news of God's Kingdom as revealed through the king Jesus Christ.

- all books of the Bible **point toward Jesus** - the one who would fulfill the story of the Old Testament and begin the new creation with his own resurrection.

Survey the passage, Mark 7:24-37:

What is odd about this landscape?

- Jesus seems to be rather rude to this poor woman. He calls her a dog and refuses to help her, and it seems like that's simply what's happening.

-In the second part, Jesus seems to employ some very unusual healing techniques like spitting and actually putting his fingers in the man's ears and mouth.

-And after that, Jesus strictly warns everyone to not tell anyone about what he's doing.

Why would he do that?

- When things seem strange in a particular part of the Bible, it's always important to take a step back and get the **sweep of the wider landscape**. In context, things tend to make more sense.

-This is called the rule of letting scripture interpret scripture. It means looking at the things that are clearer and letting them help us make sense of the tricky parts.

– in this case, Mark 7:1-23 is very helpful.

- Jesus is antagonized by the Pharisees and Scribes.
- They accuse him of disregarding the laws from the Old Testament.
- They call him and his disciples unclean and defiled.
- Jesus refutes them, but when he turns to his own disciples they seem to be more on side with the pharisees and in amazement he says to them – “you don’t get it either?!” – he explains everything again to them in hopes that something gets through

- All of that leads us up to a very special moment in Jesus’ ministry – he ventures outside of Israelite territory
- Jesus did all of his life of service within the traditional borders of Israel except for these places here in Mark 7
- the shocking thing that happens out in the land of these lawless gentiles comes next

- He finds someone who believes Jesus has the power to heal. The person closest to the kingdom in Mark Chapter 7 is not the well educated religious man, but the humble foreign, Greek/Syrophenician woman
 - a signal of the upheaval, and the freedom Jesus brings with his kingdom.

Jesus’ choice of words:

- should he give to these gentiles the gifts God has intended for his own (Israelite) children?
- a picture of a scene the woman would understand well: in a Greek household, house dogs were different than scavenging street dogs, and this woman would know well that the food on the table is not meant for the dogs but for the children.
- Jesus is saying his ministry is for the Jews, like the food on the table is for the children. It’s not flattering, but it’s not really a shocking picture either.

- she is saying, “I don’t doubt you are on mission in Israel, but since you’re away from Israel on a short break, can I not have this small request?”

- she amazes Jesus, but this time in a positive way, unlike his disciples.

Deaf and Mute Man:

The friends of this man come seeking a blessing, not a healing. But they get much more than they bargain for.

- Jesus takes the man aside – presumably because this man had become very passive in his disability. He could not communicate –. He was by necessity a recluse – alone among the crowd.

Jesus takes him aside and they focus their attention on each other, intensely. This would have been inches apart, face to face – Jesus made sure this man knew he had Jesus’ full attention.

What's more, the man can still **see**, **feel**, and **taste**, and these senses are all engaged as Jesus heals the man

-spitting, may symbolize the removal of a "bad" thing in your mouth,

Freedom, for the outsiders, the marginalized, and lonely. A life that is "opened up".

Jesus' work is an opening work, a freeing service to people.

Do you believe He has the exact same authority and power to open and free the lives of people today?

The story of freedom in Mark 7 is like a big sign, saying "It's here!!"

– what's here? The fulfillment of the promise **from Isaiah 35:4-7**

- it is also a challenge to us as a church, to Get on Board with the Kingdom work that God is doing.

Jesus is ushering in a Kingdom that is taking root among us.

When we get on board with God plans, we become part of opening the lives of people who have been stifled and choked out by the cares and anxieties of this world. And we ourselves receive healing too.

-In our passage today, Jesus came with a laser-focus on the Jewish people, and so he told the people in this foreign region to keep it quiet – he didn't come to be known as a mere travelling wonder-worker, he came to stake his claim as the King that demanded the allegiance of the Jew first, and now, after the cross, all the people of the earth.

- a small, odd landscape has now become a central piece, locking together the promises of the Old Testament and the future hope of the **age to come** – when all people who come to Jesus and bow will be "opened" released" and set free.