

Lesson 7 11 September, 2011

Jesus Ministers Among the Gentiles

Lesson Scope: *Mark 7:1-8:26*

Lesson Focus

Jesus spent the busy hours of his earthly life meeting the needs of those around Him. He met their physical needs with bread and fishes. He ministered to their spiritual needs by teaching with authority and "not as the scribes." To the Pharisees, He spoke rebuke for their unbelief and self-righteousness. To the poor Syrophenician woman, He gave tender words of healing.

The jealous Pharisees and scribes sought to thwart the loving ministry of Jesus. They wanted Jesus to answer to them for His actions. They wanted to impose the traditions of their law upon the Son of God Himself. Jesus longed to set the people free, but the Pharisees attempted to bind grievous burdens on them.

Jesus traveled far to find the needy soul. From around the Sea of Galilee in chapters 6 and 7, He went north into Gentile country to cast out a devil. He returned to the other side of the Sea to heal the deaf and dumb man. There on the rolling hillsides by the sea, He fed the thousands once again. Sailing back to Palestine proper, He met the haughty Pharisees waiting for Him, but He found a blind man and give him sight.

Jesus ministered to the Jew first, but He also reached out to the Gentiles. His compassion rose above all prejudice and bias.

Jesus ministered to the needs of several Gentile seekers in this scope. This activity irritated the self-righteous Pharisees, and they openly criticized Jesus for it. Jesus' interest in the Gentiles holds a precious note for us, a message of hope that we too may receive divine provisions in time of need. However interesting the concept of salvation to the Jew first and also to the Gentile may be, beware of spending too much time on that. Keep the lesson aim in focus as you study this lesson and promote the practical expressions of love and compassion without prejudice or bias in your personal life and others.

Allow Christ's expression of divine love and compassion to warm your heart. Be impressed with the completeness of Christ's provisions, and let this lesson point you to the abundant life available to all men.

Lesson Aim: To portray Christ's desire to meet the needs of all mankind.

Theme Verse: *Mark 10:45*. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Lesson Text

The Daughter Released

Mark 7:24-30 ²⁴ And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know *it*: but he could not be hid. ²⁵ For a *certain* woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: ²⁶ The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. ²⁷ But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* unto the dogs. ²⁸ And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. ²⁹ And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. ³⁰ And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

Deaf and Dumb Man Loosed

Mark 7:31-35 ³¹ And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. ³² And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. ³³ And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; ³⁴ And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. ³⁵ And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

The Four Thousand Fed

Mark 8:1-8 ¹ In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and saith unto them, ² I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: ³ And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. ⁴ And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these *men* with bread here in the wilderness? ⁵ And he asked them, How

many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. ⁶ And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before *them*; and they did set *them* before the people. ⁷ And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before *them*. ⁸ So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets.

Man Restored

Mark 8:22-26 ²² And he cometh to Bethania; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. ²³ And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. ²⁴ And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. ²⁵ After that he put *his* hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. ²⁶ And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell *it* to any in the town.

Questions for Study

The Daughter Released

1. What was Jesus referring to when He spoke of children and dogs?
2. How did Jesus both stimulate and reward the faith of this woman? The

Deaf and Dumb Man Loosed

3. Why might Jesus have taken the deaf and dumb man aside from the multitude?
4. What was the testimony of the people after observing Jesus' miraculous power?

The Four Thousand Fed

5. How did Jesus demonstrate compassion on the great multitude?
6. What does Jesus provide for those who exercise faith in Him?

The Blind Man Restored

7. What do we learn about Jesus' work when we observe the steps of healing this blind man experienced?
8. How do we find complete provisions for the needs in our lives? Lesson

Analyzing the Passage

In the scope of this lesson, Jesus centered His ministry in northern Palestine and southern Phoenicia. He spoke with the critical Pharisees on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Then He traveled north into Syrophenicia,

where he healed the demon-possessed daughter. He returned to the east side of the Sea of Galilee before sailing across to the west side again. On the west side of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus ministered to the Jews. However, in Phoenicia and east of the Sea of Galilee, He helped some needy Gentiles. This activity among the Gentiles likely stirred the Pharisees' antagonism. They would not follow Jesus into Phoenicia and Decapolis, but waited for Him to return.

When Jesus used the term children (Mark 7:27) in speaking with the Syro-phenician woman, He referred to the Jews. The Jews held a stiff prejudice against the Gentiles, even calling them dogs (Mark 7:27). Jesus' use of these terms does not mean that He shared this prejudice. Instead, He stimulated the woman's faith in Him as the Saviour to the Jew first and also to the Gentiles. The pronunciation of healing of the Gentile girl proves that Jesus loves all men alike.

Mark here records several unusual methods of healing (Mark 7:33). The friends of the deaf and dumb man begged Jesus to heal him. Jesus put His fingers in his ears, spit, and touched his tongue before finally healing him with His spoken word. Likely Jesus used these as signs that the power of the Great Physician would cure the sickness. Jesus' sigh demonstrated to those around Him that He grieved at the bondage of sin upon those He healed.

Mark 8 records a second time that Jesus fed, with loaves and fishes, the multitude that followed Him. Again, Jesus first stimulated His disciples' faith in Him before giving thanks and distributing the food.

When Jesus healed the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26), He performed the miracle differently than anywhere else recorded. In this case, the blind man found his sight gradually rather than immediately. No one is certain why Jesus spit into the eyes of this man, but we do know that Jesus had great compassion on him. Jesus personally took him by the hand and led him outside the city, where He took him one step at a time from sightlessness to blurred vision to complete healing.

Principles and Applications

The Daughter Released

1. Christ makes His resources available to all (Mark 7:24-26). God created of one blood all nations (Acts 17:26). Even though God worked with the Jews as His chosen people to bring the Messiah into the world, He also provided for the grafting in of the Gentiles (Romans 11). Paul declared in Romans 1:16 that salvation is for all men to the "Jew first, and also to the

Greek." Today, just as Jesus did, we hold forth the provisions and power of God without prejudice or bias.

2. The presence of Christ brings hope to those in Satan's bondage (Mark 7:25-26). Outside of Christ, man flounders in defeat, but Christ has bound the strong man (Mark 3:27). We must employ the power of Christ to fight the battles of our flesh and mind. Only then can we have spiritual success and cast down the strongholds that bind us (2 Corinthians 10:4).

3. Christ desires a humble response of faith (Mark 7:27-28). Many times Jesus stimulated the faith of those He healed. He encouraged the Syrophenician woman to press on through the roadblocks of prejudice to receive the healing of the Great Physician. Christ will not bless our carnal resistance of His purposes for us. In the midst of toil and sorrow, we must claim God's promises.

4. Christ rewards the faith of the sincere seeker with victory and rest (7:29-30). When this pleading woman cast her all upon the Saviour, He proclaimed her daughter healed. If we stop resisting and start trusting, Christ will calm our spirit and give us peace. Many times our proud heart becomes our worst hindrance to spiritual blessing.

The Deaf and Dumb Man Loosed

5. Christ meets the specific needs of those who come to Him in faith (Mark 7:32-33). Our omniscient Saviour knows exactly what we need and when we need it. In quiet times aside from the bustle of life, He lays His finger on our problems. One step at a time, He leads us to the next level of spiritual maturity. Our faith in His healing touch breaks the chain of bondage on our soul.

6. Christ seeks to open the understanding of men (Mark 7:34-35). We cannot understand or receive God's truth if sin binds our life. But when Christ heals our soul, He unlooses our tied tongue so that we might testify plainly

The Four Thousand Fed

7. Christ is concerned with man's physical needs (Mark 8:1-2). "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? ... Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:26, 32). God created man with the need for sustenance and in turn He supplies the needed strength to continue in His service.

8. Christ provides bountiful, divine supply to people of faith (Mark 8:5-8). We never can plumb the depths of Christ's ability to meet our every need. Beyond giving us each day our daily bread, He can save us to the uttermost if we come to God through Him (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus said, "I am come

that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The Blind Man Restored

9. Christ leads the faltering step by step to faith in Him (Mark 8:22-23). Many times our faith lags in the midst of our distress, and our human strength fails. In times such as these, Christ tenderly leads us away from our troubles to Himself. He walks beside us as we make each choice of faith and obedience that leads us to greater spiritual maturity. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:29, 30).

Important Teachings

1. Christ makes His resources available to all (Mark 7:24-26).
2. The presence of Christ brings hope to those in Satan's bondage (Mark 7:25-26).
3. Christ desires a humble response of faith (Mark 7:27-28).
4. Christ rewards the faith of the sincere seeker with victory and rest (Mark 7:29-30).
5. Christ meets the specific needs of those who come to Him in faith (Mark 7:32-33).
6. Christ seeks to open the understanding of men (Mark 7:34-35).
7. Christ is concerned with man's physical needs (Mark 8:1-2).
8. Christ provides bountiful, divine supply to people of faith (Mark 8:5-8).
9. Christ leads the faltering step by step to faith in Him (Mark 8:22-23).

Answers to Questions

1. What was Jesus referring to when He spoke of children and dogs?
Jesus was using the common expressions of the Jews of His day. The Jews, by referring to themselves as children, acknowledged that they considered themselves God's chosen people. They looked down on the Gentiles as outcasts or mere dogs. In this way, the Jews showed prejudice and bias. This prejudice could have stood as a roadblock to the faith of the Syro-phenician woman.
2. How did Jesus both stimulate and reward the faith of this woman?
Jesus stimulated her faith by challenging her with the question of whether she was eligible to receive the provisions of the Jews' Messiah. When she

put herself entirely on His mercy by claiming right to the leftover crumbs of blessing, Jesus rewarded her great faith by commanding the devil to depart from her daughter.

3. Why might Jesus have taken the deaf and dumb man aside from the multitude?

Probably He wanted to remove the man from the distractions of the crowd around lest they should hinder his faith. Possibly He wanted the man to express personal faith rather than depend on those who brought him to Christ.

4. What was the testimony of the people after observing Jesus' miraculous power?

They proclaimed that Jesus had done all things well. They acknowledged Him as the source of divine power and blessing.

5. How did Jesus demonstrate compassion on the great multitude?

He noted that they had been away from their homes for several days and by now had depleted their food supply. He showed concern that they would be too weak from hunger to get home. He met their physical needs completely with plenty left over.

6. What does Jesus provide for those who exercise faith in Him?

He provides for all their needs. He gives them their daily bread and heals their physical sicknesses. He saves them to the uttermost from sin's defilement. He breaks the power and habit of sin in their life. He breaks the strongholds of Satan's bondage in the mind and emotions. He provides healing for hurting and sorrowing souls.

7. What do we learn about Jesus' work when we observe the steps of healing this blind man experienced?

We learn that His divinity did not displace the humility of His earthly life. We learn that He has tender compassion on the faltering. He works patiently with the frailty and weakness of humanity. He desires to stimulate our faith, open our understanding, and unloose us from our bondage. We learn that He does not cut us off immediately but instead is willing to wait on our choice of faith.

8. How do we find complete provisions for the needs in our lives?

We must be willing to allow others to point us to the Great Physician. We must come to Him in faith. We must obey His direction. We must humbly seek Him for the healing we need.

Summarizing the Lesson

Jesus showed compassion on the sick bodies and souls that milled about Him every day. Anyone who came to Him in faith, He healed completely.

Jesus did not turn any needy one away regardless of who he was or how Satan had bound him. Through each miracle, Christ showed to all His power-divine power capable of providing abundant life to all who come in faith. Patiently, He opens our eyes to what He can do in our lives and unlooses our tongues so that we may praise Him.

Research Guide

1. Study a map of northern Palestine. Follow Jesus' travels from west of the Sea of Galilee, north to Phoenicia, south again to the east of the Sea of Galilee, and across by boat to the west side of the sea.
2. Using a Bible dictionary or Baker's Bible Atlas, study the people who lived in these areas that Jesus visited. Note who were Jews and who were Gentiles.