

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**Title: The Healing Ministry of Jesus****Lesson: Mark 7:24-37**

²⁴ From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, ²⁵ but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. ²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷ He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁸ But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." ²⁹ Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰ So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. ³¹ Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³² They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³ He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." ³⁵ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶ Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷ They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

Good morning Church! It's September. It's time to return to school for students after a long summer break. And, September is my favorite month of the year because the weather is so nice, and above all, my birthday is in September. Also, on September 1st last year my family and I came to Clear Lake. When we arrived, two workers were already unloading into the parsonage. At that time, everything was new to us. It was my first time living in an American house, so I needed to

learn about the new home because I didn't even know how to open the kitchen windows. And, at that time, my son just started to roll over, but now he walks well, doesn't stop moving, climbs on the sofa and dining chairs, and makes a mess every day. But, it seems we are settled well now.

(Slide 1) This is my story, so how are you? How is your life? In Hebrew, people say Shalom when they greet people or when they say good-bye just like we say hi, hello, and good-bye. Shalom means literally peace. Similarly, in Korea, people say An-nyeong when they greet people or when they say good-bye. Its meaning is also peace. In Korea, there are many ways to say hi, hello. Koreans ask how are you? How's it going? when they greet people, but there are other ways like "Have you had lunch?" "Have you had dinner?" Then, what would they say instead of good-bye? Anyhow, in many countries, greetings are peace.

There are also the opposite words of peace, shalom, and An-nyeong like chaos, meltdown, panic. People often use those words when they don't feel peace and lose direction in what to do. When Covid-19 was just starting to spread in the United States, many people panicked, so they started carting everything they could buy in the market. You may remember last year when it was difficult to find toilet paper, paper towel. Also, the opposite of peace, shalom, and An-nyeong is called stress. According to a survey in Korea, the main cause of stress is human relationships. I remember that I saw similar results in US survey too. Do you agree with that?

(Slide 2) One of the great things that I saw in America is respect for people with disabilities. When people build buildings in the states, they seem to have people with disabilities in mind. I feel their consideration for them in parking lots, the entrance of buildings, and restrooms. However, not all countries are like the United States. For example, S. Korea lacks many facilities for the disabled. Unlike the states, there are not many wheelchair-accessible restrooms in Korea. And there are a lot of stairs, so it's not easy for the people with disabilities to enter the building freely. As a result, they rarely go out, and if they are on the street, many people look at them with interest. The gaze of others often makes them close the door of their hearts. So, some people with disabilities are extremely reluctant to go out because they are afraid of people's gaze, social discrimination against disability.

In today's Gospel of Mark, two people who lost their peace are described. One was the mother of a daughter possessed by an unclean spirit, and the other was deaf and unable to speak.

(Slide 3) The time when Jesus lived was a time when the medical field was not as developed as it is now. So people used to consider people suffering from mental illness as people possessed by unclean spirits. The life of a demon-possessed daughter and her mother would not have been easy because of others' eye and reaction. Rumors about the demon-possessed daughter would have spread throughout the village, and all their relationships with others would have been severed. They may have lost their jobs, or they may have struggled to make a living because of the demon-possessed daughter. It wasn't the possessed daughter that bothered her family, but the cold reaction and eye of others around them. Their lives were far from peaceful. While they were living in chaos, her mother heard a rumor about Jesus who is the Son of God, and that he fed over 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish, and that he healed the sick. The rumors about Jesus gave her hope. She believed that Jesus would be able to heal her daughter from the demon. So, she left her sick daughter at home and departed from Syrophenician to meet Jesus. Finally, she arrived at the place where Jesus is.

Jesus was always with crowd. So it would not have been easy for her to even approach Jesus. However, she had to break through the crowd for her daughter, and she stood in front of Jesus and asked: "Jesus, cast the demon out of my daughter." (26)

(Slide 4) Contrary to our expectations, however, Jesus rejected her request, saying: "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." (27) Strangely, Jesus refused her request in a manner similar to that of the Pharisees. By the way, she walked that far alone to meet Jesus with hope and faith that Jesus would save her daughter from the unclean spirit. But, contrary to her expectations, Jesus turned down her request and rather described her as a dog. It was a great insult to compare her to a dog. When Jesus rejected her request, she must have gone into a panic.

But in this situation, the Gentile woman called Jesus as "Lord". She was humble and admitted that she is nothing before God answering "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." (28) This was her faith. Whatever her Lord

called her, for her 'The Lord is Lord.' Although it was difficult for her to accept Jesus' rejection, Jesus was only her hope.

When Jesus saw her center and faith, he healed her daughter saying: "You may go—the demon has left your daughter." When she went home, she found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. (30)

Sometimes bad things may happen to people who love and serve God faithfully. Sometimes bad things may happen to good people. When people feel like God is not hearing their prayers, they sometimes become frustrated and lose faith. The woman who had a demon-possessed daughter was gentile and came to see Jesus with hope and faith. Although she heard a refusal and an insult, she didn't give up, but she did hold on to the Lord. She was the gentile, but Jesus showed love by breaking down ethnic and religious barriers. Because of her faith, her family and she found peace. Jesus' ministries break down boundaries people have and give peace.

(Slide 5) Another miracle episode is described. It was about a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech. While Jesus was in Galilee, people brought him the deaf man. People may have wanted Jesus to heal the deaf in front of them. However, Jesus called him aside and healed him. The reason may be that he didn't want to make him a spectacle in front of people. This means that God meets everyone one-on-one. Jesus put his fingers into his ears, and spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha." (33-34) At last his ears were opened, and his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. The ministries of Jesus restored humans and gave them peace. Jesus healed not only the physical problems, but also people's minds and souls. "Ephphatha" was a declaration of freedom. It was a public declaration that the deaf man was freed from all oppression, ridicule and eye.

In the early church, Jesus was the only healer. Only Jesus could truly heal the sick. Likewise, only Jesus can give us peace. What we can learn from today's scripture is that God hears the prayers of those who are desperate, and the prayers of the poor. He heals the wounded hearts beyond the physical disability. May we join in God's grace that give us peace and heal us through the power of the cross and resurrection. Amen.