

# He has done everything well

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[ 0 : 00 ] James Montgomery Boyce was the pastor of 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, and the author of numerous Christian books and commentaries. The name may be familiar to some of you here this evening. A few years ago, he was diagnosed with a virulent and, as it proved, terminal cancer at the age of 60, seemingly at the very height of his usefulness and fruitfulness in the Lord's service. Between the diagnosis and his death, there were just six very fleeting weeks that passed. Now, you can imagine how his congregation on hearing of the news, family and friends were sad, were distraught at the prospect of his imminent departure as it became clear that in the absence of miraculous intervention, he would die.

James Boyce had these words to say to those who were so distraught at these circumstances, and as he contemplated his own unexpected and seemingly untimely death. And these were the words that he directed to those around him. Be at peace about this. God does all things well.

God does all things well. In our passage, the people who saw Jesus heal the deaf and mute man, some of whom had brought the man to Jesus, they came to a similar conclusion concerning the Son of God.

We read the very words that they announced as they saw what Jesus did. We read there at the end of chapter 7 of Mark's gospel, the testimony of these folks. He has done everything well.

Like Father, like Son. God does all things well. Jesus does all things well. Everything well.

[ 2 : 41 ] I want to think about this passage, this occasion, this event recorded by Mark. In the context or in the light of this testimony concerning Jesus, he has done everything well.

We're going to see how he has done everything well in his healing and saving of this man, this deaf and mute man who was brought to him. So in the life of this one individual, we will see how he did everything well. But we'll also be able to take a step back, and see the bigger picture that Mark wants us to see, and see how in his healing and saving of the world, Jesus has done everything well. Then also very fleetingly see how Jesus continues to do everything well in and through his people, in and through you and me. So let's begin by thinking about the man.

We'll begin with this one individual and see the work of Jesus, his work of salvation in this one deaf and mute man.

Now this is a man, we've read the passage, he is a man that many would have viewed as flawed, broken, and maybe many would have concluded of little, if any, value at all. He was deaf, he was mute.

What could he do? What value could possibly be attributed to this broken man? He was an object at best of pity, and at worst of scorn. We're told that he was mute, or that he had great difficulties, certainly in speaking.

[ 4 : 32 ] He could hardly talk is the way in which it's presented here in our version. And it would seem that he could make an effort, but it was so difficult to understand him. And you can just imagine how over the years, he would have been the object of scorn and mockery as he struggled to make himself understood.

And this is the man who Jesus heals. Thought of little or no value by many, but valuable to Jesus and loved by Jesus.

I want you to notice as we think about this man and Jesus dealing with this man and healing this man, I want us to think about that by considering three aspects of the healing and saving intervention of Jesus in the life of this man. The first thing I want you to notice is that it was grounded, what Jesus did was grounded in a heartfelt solidarity with the man's pain.

It wouldn't be surprising if we were to suggest that the man suffered greatly because of his condition. It was a painful fate that had befallen him. But what is striking is how in what Mark tells

us, it's clear that Jesus was in solidarity with this man's pain. I'm thinking particularly of words that we find in verse 34 when we read, then he looked up, Jesus looked up to heaven, and with a deep sigh said to him.

And the focus here is on this record that Mark gives, that in healing the man, as he is about to address the man, he does so with a deep sigh. What does that mean? What does that tell us about Jesus?

[ 6 : 27 ] The words with a deep sigh could be translated that he moaned. And what certainly is true, however it's translated, is that this is an expression of pain on the part of Jesus.

Why the pain? That the man would be moaning, that the man would be sighing, would be understandable. But it's Jesus who is sighing, it's Jesus who is moaning and groaning in pain as he witnesses this man who has been brought before him. Why the pain? I think we can understand the pain at two levels.

I think at one level is there's the pain of solidarity with the man's plight, with the man's pain. Jesus feels his pain, not only at this moment of encounter, a moment that Jesus knows well will soon be transformed, and the pain and the shame and the misery is soon to be removed. But I think the solidarity isn't with the pain that the man perhaps is experiencing at that very moment, but as Jesus considers all that had gone before, the life that this man had lived, the misery that had been in great measure his existence as a result of his condition. All of this is known to Jesus, and Jesus is in solidarity with this man as he sighs and then addresses this word of power that brings healing and liberation.

I think there is that level at which Jesus sighs with pain. But I think there's something deeper here, and I think there's something here that's not unlike what we witness of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus, where Jesus wept. Again, in circumstances where he knew very well that very soon the situation would be transformed and Lazarus would be risen from the grave, and yet Jesus wept. Why did he weep there?

Why does he sigh here? I think what we have here, and I think it's reasonable to suggest, to conclude even, that what we find in Jesus is that he's pained by the evidence before him, this tangible evidence of the curse and consequences of sin in the lives of those blighted by the fall.

[ 8 : 49 ] Of course, that's not to say that the sin in question was the sin of this individual, but Jesus sees the bigger picture. Jesus knows that all this pain, all this misery, is because of the fall. It's because of sin and its curse and consequences, and Jesus sees this, and he sighs in pain as he witnesses before him this evidence of sin and its consequences. Sin pains him. Sin provokes in him a sad and righteous indignation, and he moans and he sighs.

This saving intervention in the life of this man is marked by this characteristic in Jesus, and as we think of our own circumstances, and as you perhaps consider your own circumstances, and the pain that maybe you are enduring for one reason or another, be assured that Jesus understands. Not only does he understand in some way that reflects his omniscience, that, well, he knows all things, so he knows your pain, but that he feels your pain. He sympathizes with your pain as he sighed before this man in his condition, so also with us. But I think we can also draw from this not only comfort for ourselves, though we can do that, but also see how Jesus serves as an example and a challenge to us as we would reach out to others in their pain.

We need to understand, and in some measure, it will not be in the measure that was true of Jesus, but in some measure feel the pain of those we seek to reach out to. So, the saving intervention of Jesus grounded in a heartfelt solidarity with this man's pain. But we can also notice how what Jesus does, and the manner in which Jesus deals with this man is marked by a gentle sensitivity.

Going back to verse 33, and just noticing the manner in which Jesus deals with him. We read, after he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into his man's ears, and it continues. But especially the first part of that verse 33, where Mark very deliberately speaks and provides a detail that may seem insignificant to us, that Jesus took him aside, away from the crowd.

Why did Jesus do that? Why did he so deliberately seek to have a measure of privacy with this man as he was about to heal him? Well, this man, I think we can reasonably assume, had been the object over the years of mocking curiosity, his almost unintelligible groans, a source of shame and misery for him.

[ 11 : 51 ] And so, Jesus takes him apart to deal with him gently and sensitively. But then we also have what follows, not only this taking him apart, but we have what seems to be some kind of healing ritual that takes place. We're told that in verse 33 that having taken him apart, Jesus put his

fingers into the man's ears. Then he spat, presumably on his hands, and touched the man's tongue. What's all this about? Why this need for physical contact?

Clearly, it's not something that Jesus needs to do in order to perform the miracle. It's not some kind of healing ritual that, in the absence of, the healing will not take place. It's clear that what Jesus is doing is not for his benefit, but for the benefit of the man. In fact, it's not a ritual at all. I think the simplest explanation is that this is sign language. The man is deaf. You know, he can't hear. And so, in this very sensitive way, Jesus touches him. He employs the senses that the man does understand of touch and sight to deal so sensitively and personally with him. And as he touches him in this way, in this intimate and compassionate way, there is also an affirmation of the man's dignity, that Jesus would be willing to touch him in this way. Jesus doesn't deal with him at arm's length, keeping a safe distance from this poor man. There is a gentle sensitivity in his dealing with him. And that, of course, remains the case of the man in which Jesus deals with us, but also remains a challenge for us as we, as his followers, seek to reach out to others. But one final aspect of what Jesus does with this man that I want to mention before moving on to the bigger picture of what this miracle tells us about the big picture. But as we remain with this man, there's a third thing we can say is that the healing of Jesus is executed with one word of power. Having touched the man's ears, having touched the man's tongue, we read in verse 34 that Jesus looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, which means be opened. This is the moment of healing. This is the moment of liberation for this man.

One word announced, pronounced by Jesus is sufficient to transform this man, to heal this man. Be opened.

As we read the verse, it almost seems as if Jesus is addressing the man's ears and mouth. But it's interesting that the form of the verb that Jesus uses is in the singular, and Jesus is addressing the man, the man himself, this man with a personality and a past and a future, a part of a family. He's addressing this man. Be open. Be liberated. Be transformed. Now, the evidence of that would be in the physical healing of his deafness and his muteness, but there's something bigger going on here as Jesus, with one word of power, transforms this man. Indeed, that what is going on here goes beyond physical healing, though clearly physical healing is at the forefront, but that it goes beyond physical healing is hinted at in the language that Mark uses when he's describing the consequence of this word of command. There in verse 35, we read at this, the man's ears were open, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak plainly. This expression, his tongue was loosened. Another way of translating it, a more perhaps wooden, literal way of translating it would be the chain of his tongue was loosened.

[16:18] And that certainly suggests that what we have here goes beyond the simple physical ailment or disability to a spiritual disability that is being addressed by Jesus. One word of power reminds me of the centurion, and in the Gospels we're told of the occasion when the centurion brought his servant to Jesus and in due course commended for his faith because he addressed Jesus with these words, just say the word and my servant will be healed. And of course, so it was. Here Jesus says the word and the man is healed. Just for a moment before we move on to the big picture, just imagine if this man had been asked the day before this healing took place. We don't know how long he had suffered from this condition. We would imagine many years. But imagine if the day before the healing takes place, if somebody had approached this man and said, do you believe that God does everything well? We're thinking about these words. We're kind of revolving our thoughts around these words.

Imagine if somebody had asked him, had managed to get that question through by sign language, however they could have communicated with this man. Do you believe that God does everything well?

I wonder what his answer would have been. We don't know. But we do know what his answer was after this occasion. He would have gladly and confidently and assuredly declared, God does everything well.

I think that's something that we can draw and apply to our own circumstances and moments of pain and confusion and when everything seems chaotic and a mess and nothing seems to be going well. To rest in this assurance and this confidence that God does everything well. But let's move on quickly to the bigger picture. The work of Jesus, his saving work for all in every age. You see, Mark is not concerned principally in his gospel with presenting Jesus as a miracle worker, but rather presenting Jesus as the eternal Son of God, the promised divine Messiah. And how does he do that

on this occasion? Well, I would suggest that he does so by a deliberate allusion to the chapter that we read in Isaiah. Notice the word that is used by Jesus, or by Mark rather, in describing the situation of this man. In verse 32, we're told that the man could hardly talk. There in the outline that you may be able to glance at, there's the Greek word that is used there, mogilalos, could hardly speak, could hardly talk. It's an unusual word for Mark to use to describe this mute man. And so unusual, in fact, that it's only found on one other occasion in the Bible and in its Greek form only in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.

And it's found in that passage that we read in Isaiah chapter 35 that speaks of the coming Messiah. And it speaks of the evidence that this Messiah has come. And in verse 35 of Isaiah, rather in chapter 35 of Isaiah, and in verse 36, we read, then the lame will leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.

[19:52] There are those words, the mute tongue. And that passage, written, of course, in Hebrew, was translated into Greek. It is this word that was employed, the mute tongue, the one who can hardly speak. And it would seem that Mark is very deliberately pointing his readers to this reality that what Jesus did isn't just an amazing miracle, that we can look back and say, wow, isn't it amazing, the power of Jesus?

But what Mark is doing, he's saying, you've got to understand what this means about who Jesus is and about why Jesus has come. And of course, as he points his readers to this chapter in Isaiah 35, there is a wealth of information concerning the identity and the mission of Jesus. And let's just think very fleetingly of what we discover there that Mark is pointing us to. Isaiah 35 tells us about the identity of Jesus. We've read the chapter, but let's just draw out one or two very striking realities here that speak of the identity of Jesus, of the one who is promised in this chapter and who would come. What is said about him? We're told that when those who witness his coming, when they see what he does, we're told there in verse 2 that they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God.

So, what Mark is telling us is that in Jesus we see the glory and splendor of God. Because that's what we're told in John's gospel, that he dwelt among us and we beheld his glory. When Jesus came, he fulfilled this messianic prophecy of how God would come to save his people and his people would see the glory of the Lord and the splendor of our God. In Jesus, we see the glory and splendor of God. But in Jesus, it is God who comes to save. Again, in the same chapter in Isaiah, we read in verse 4, be strong, do not fear, your God will come. He will come with vengeance, with divine retribution. He will come to save you. So, the prophet looks forward to a day when God would come to save. Mark is telling us that in Jesus, God has come to save. And so, the chapter tells us about the identity of Jesus. But the chapter that Mark points us to by this unusual use of the word that we've identified, the chapter also tells us about the mission of Jesus, why he came, what was his purpose in coming. Well, he came to bring life and healing.

Verse 35 is full of references to life and to vigor and to healing. The time doesn't allow us to go through the whole chapter and identify those. But if we simply read verses that are so replete with allusions to life and healing at the very beginning of the chapter, the desert and the parched land will be glad. The wilderness will rejoice and blossom like the crocus. It will burst into bloom. It will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. And then, of course, the verses that speak about the healing ministry of the one who would come. We read there in verse 5, then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer and the mute tongue shout for joy. And so, Mark, in pointing us to this chapter and saying, when you see Jesus doing these things, you've got to understand that he's doing these things because he is the one who was promised to come and do these things. He is the one who has come to bring life and healing, but also the one who has come to deal with sin. Because then in verses 3 and 4 of Isaiah 35, we read, strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way, say 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. But we're left maybe a little pensive and maybe even a little puzzled as to how Jesus, how this promised Messiah who we're identifying as Jesus, how he's going to deal with sin. How did Jesus fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 35 in this crucial matter of dealing with sin? You see, the prophecy presents us with a problem, that God and the person of the Messiah is coming to execute judgment and to punish sinners. He will come with vengeance, with divine retribution. The arrangement of these verses that we've sung speaks of him coming, your God will surely come to you with vengeance and all those whose sins deserve his punishment.

These are the words that we sung, not an exact translation, but that capture the idea. And so Isaiah is saying is that the Messiah will come and he'll come to punish sinners. And then this great vision of a restored land will be fulfilled. Now the problem is that that would be fine if we lived in a world of goodies and baddies and we're the goodies and Jesus comes to execute judgment and punish the baddies. Well, that's fine. So he can punish the baddies and we're left to enjoy this paradise that's described. But of course, the problem is that we're all baddies.

And so we'll say, well, hang on a minute. If he's going to come to punish sinners, well, we're all going to get punished. And this paradise, who's it going to be for? It's not just going to be a lonely planet. It's going to be an empty planet if he comes to punish sinners because we're all going to be struck down if that is what he comes to do. So how is it that this prophecy is fulfilled that the Messiah will come to bring vengeance and to bring divine retribution? How does he fulfill this? [ 26 : 06 ] How did Jesus fulfill this? Of course, the answer as to how Jesus fulfilled this prophecy is to be found in the gospel in the saving and atoning death of Messiah Jesus. He came not to bring divine retribution to us who are sinners, but to bear divine retribution. There was retribution in the work of Jesus, but he bore it. He bore it for us. There is vengeance in the work of Jesus, but it's the vengeance that he takes upon himself that we might not be punished, that we might be spared.

And so in the light of Jesus and his work, we can understand the way in which Messiah deals with sin for us. And so Mark points us to Isaiah. He points us to this chapter, and as he does so, he helps us understand not only who Jesus is, but what he came to do to bring life and healing, to deal with sin. And then also just to notice from this chapter, to bring us home. In chapter, in verse 8, there's this beautiful picture of a highway, a way of holiness, and a highway will be there. It will be called the way of holiness. And there's much that could be said about this highway, this way of holiness. But there's one thing we can say without going into any more detail, in that it is a highway, a way that brings us home to be with our God in a restored relationship of friendship with him, secured by Messiah Jesus. And so as we consider the big picture of Jesus as the promised Messiah, as the one who came to save the world, to save sinners such as we are, we can conclude that in that big picture, he has done everything well. He did everything well for this one poor man, this deaf and mute man, but he also did everything well in securing salvation for the world. But then finally, I just want to notice, and more briefly, a final aspect of this, bringing it to the present, so today for us, and to notice how the work of Jesus, his work of salvation today in and through us. And for this, we return to Mark in chapter 7, and I just want to touch on the symbolism of the miracle there recorded for us in chapter 7. And we've already noticed how the miracles in Mark's gospel, indeed in all the gospels, are intended to serve as signs. In and of themselves, they secure a great outcome, the healing of this man. But they do more than simply secure the healing of one individual. They are a sign that points to the work of Jesus, not only in this case pointing back to information about Jesus in the Old Testament, but in a more direct way pointing to the work of Jesus on our behalf. Now, on some occasions, that's so very evident. Indeed, if you, we move to the following chapter, chapter 8, and from verse 22, the healing of a blind man in Bethsaida, and we'll come to that, no doubt, in two or three weeks' time. But there it's very clear, and if you remember the story, then we won't use the time to read the verses, but the healing of this blind man was gradual. And you say, well, why was it gradual? Usually, when Jesus healed a man, it was immediate.

But here, it's a gradual healing. He can see things just hazily and blurrily, and then eventually, he sees more clearly. But then immediately, when we read on in chapter 8, we find that we're told about Peter's confession of Christ, and that the miracle and Peter's confession are together, and the miracle serves to symbolize the disciples' gradual understanding of who Jesus is.

[ 30 : 12 ] So, the miracle secures a very real objective. A blind man can see, but it also speaks of how Jesus reveals his identity to his disciples in this gradual way. Well, as that is true of that occasion. So, in this miracle that we're considering, you have that same symbolism at work. So, when you have this man, and Jesus says to him, be opened, and his ears are opened, and his tongue is loosed, well, that speaks of and points to the work of Jesus today in the lives of believers. He opens our ears that we would understand who he is. He loosens our tongue that we might speak and give thanks and praise him.

You can just imagine this man. We're told that he began to speak plainly. And I wonder what he said. But we're not told, but we can be sure that as he spoke plainly, he used this recovered faculty of speech to thank God, to praise God, and to witness to others concerning what Jesus had done

for him.

And as that was true of this man, so it is to be true of us today. The Jesus who opened this man's ears, and who opened this man's mouth, who loosened his tongue, is the one who would do that work for us as his people today. Open our ears that we would understand more clearly, and loosen our tongues, that we would give thanks, that we would praise him joyfully, and that we would speak to others concerning him. And in this matter also, we can say, with those who saw this miracle long ago, he has done everything well. Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word. We thank you for your son. We thank you for Jesus. We thank you for who he is. We thank you for all that he has done. We thank you for what he continues to do in favor of us as his people, but also in drawing others to yourself. Heavenly Father, we pray that we would not only look on and admire what Jesus has done, but also in a measure seek to emulate Jesus as we would reach out to others. We are very conscious that we have no pretension of doing what he did, but we would learn from the manner in which he reached out to others. But we thank you also very especially that it is the same Jesus who deals with us and who deals personally and compassionately and gently and sensitively with us in our pain and in our plight and in our varied circumstances. Be with us then, we pray, and bless us, and we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.