

Sermon Notes on Mk. 7:31-37, Trinity XII

1. At this point in Jesus' life on earth, He was in heathen territory. He had just been in Tyre (vs. 24), north of Israel. Now He is in the territory of Decapolis (vs. 31) which means "ten towns." They lay east and south of the Sea of Galilee, a very heathen territory.
2. Our text is paralleled at Mt. 15:29-31 but only Mk. gives us the detailed account of the healing of the deaf-mute.
3. Jesus always used His Word to forgive sins and heal illnesses. But He did not always use the same method. To the ten lepers He gave a command which contained a promise, Lk. 17:14. To blind Bartimaeus Jesus simply said: "Receive your sight." Lk. 18:41. To cure Naaman of his leprosy (II Kings 5:10-14) Elisha said: "Wash in the Jordan seven times." But when Paul asked to be relieved of his thorn in the flesh the Lord gave Paul the grace to bear it. II Cor. 12:7-10. In each case the Word is used. The Word creates. Heb. 11:3. It creates saving faith in people. Rom. 10:17. It banishes unbelievers to hell. Mt. 25:41. It raises the dead. Jn. 11:43. It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Ps. 119:105. Only Jesus and His Word are Truth. Jn. 17:17; 14:6.
4. Jesus took this deaf-mute man aside from the multitude, placed His fingers into his ears, then He spit, then He touched the man's tongue. Then He looked up to heaven, sighed and gave the command: "Be opened!" Why did Jesus use this elaborate method of healing? We are not given the answer to this question. God uses strange methods to help us. He does not always tell us why. But we should be thankful for His mercy.
5. There is no example of Jesus saying "Don't tell anyone" when He forgave sins. But, as in the case of the healing of the deaf-mute man, Jesus forbade the people to tell anyone. He even forbade the disciples to tell anyone that He was the Christ. Mk. 8:30. He forbade Peter, James and John to tell about the transfiguration. Mk. 9:9. Why did Jesus do this? We give the answer in the next paragraph.
6. Read Is. 35 which tells us of the coming of the Christ and His Kingdom. Vss. 5-6 read: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongue of the dumb sing." These deeds of mercy proved that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ. But when Jesus entered His ministry He said: "Repent for the Kingdom of God is here." Mt. 4:17. And just before He ascended into heaven He told the disciples to preach repentance in His name for the forgiveness of sins. Lk. 24:47. The Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of faith in the Messiah for the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. Read Peter's sermon at Acts 10:34-43. He mentions that Jesus went about doing good. But that goodness only pointed to and proved the most important things, forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. Evidently Jesus forbade them to tell anyone because it might give the impression that He came ONLY to give gifts to the body only. His main purpose was to seek and save the lost. Lk. 10:19. Read Acts 3. Peter and John healed the lame man to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah Who came to save people from sin, death and the devil. Many people want only a bread-king. Jn. 6:15. But Jesus wants to give them everlasting life. Jn. 6:38-39.
7. In the OT many of the people resisted or misunderstood the message of the prophets. When Jesus came, many of the people wanted only a Savior for the body. When the apostles went out preaching they suffered much for Jesus' sake. Today too when we preach the true Word of God there will be many who misunderstand or resist the Word of God. When that happens we should read II Cor. 4. Christian teachers will meet those who are blinded by Satan, persecute the Christians and make life miserable for Christians. But twice Paul says: "We do not grow weary." Christian teachers keep their eyes on things which are not seen, the things of everlasting life. Like Jesus they look forward to everlasting life. Heb. 12:2-3.

Sermon Outline on Mk. 7:31-37, Trinity XII

Theme: HE HAS DONE ALL THINGS WELL

Introduction: This is what the people said when they saw Jesus carefully heal the deaf-mute man. Peter said the same thing at Acts 10:38: "Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." (Read Acts 10:34-43). He always did all things well even when He forbade people to tell. When God created the world He said that all was very good (Gen. 1:31). But then man fell into sin. Then Jesus came. He did all things well. He brought the new creation for all. (II Cor. 5:17-19).

I-He did this by healing peoples' illnesses. Mk. alone gives us this detailed account of the healing of this deaf-mute. Why did Jesus do all these details? To impress personal healing on this man. Satan had taken his speech and hearing away. Jesus restored it. This was a fulfillment of Is. 35:5-6: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing." The healing miracles of Jesus proved Who He was, the promised Messiah. He went about doing good. He did all things well. But miracles do not convert people. Read Jn. 2:23-25. They brought on the way to faith but only the Word of God can produce faith. See Rom. 10:17. When His enemies wanted to see a miracle Jesus refused. Mt. 12:38-39. But then He spoke of His resurrection from the dead. Jesus did not heal ALL the sick but He did heal enough to prove that He was the Messiah.

II-He did this by commanding the people to tell no one. During the last year of His life people began to look at Jesus as only a miracle worker, an entertainer, a provider only of earthly things. When Jesus provided food for the 5000 the people wanted to make Him king. See Jn. 6:14-15. Their only desire was for the body. See vs. 26. Jesus did not always prohibit people to tell about His miracles. He did not forbid blind Bartimaeus. Lk. 18:35-43. But He did forbid the people to tell about the miracle in our text. He did well by this prohibition because He was protecting them against false Messiahs. He still warns us today about false Messiahs and false ideas about Jesus the Messiah. For example at Mt. 24:4: "Beware lest someone deceive you, for many will come in My Name saying 'I am the Christ' and they will deceive many." At I Jn. 4:1 we read "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets have gone out into the world." Jesus does well when He warns us. He does good to us even when He withholds healing of the body. Paul begged to be healed but God gave Paul the strength to bear it. See II Cor. 12:7-10.

III-He does well to us by teaching us the Truth.

A-In prophecy. Read Is. 53:5-7. This passage tells us that not only would the Messiah heal the blind and the deaf but also that He would strengthen the weak, comfort the fearful-hearted and give joy to the joyless. He came to seek and save the lost. Lk. 19:10.

B-In fulfillment. Read Peter's speech at Acts 10:34-43 where He speaks about Jesus going about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil. His last sentence is: "To Jesus all the prophets witness that through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins." Whenever Jesus forgave peoples' sins He did not prohibit them from telling other people. He testified constantly even to His enemies that He wanted to give them forgiveness of sins and eternal life. No prohibition here. Read also the account of Peter and John at Acts 3:1-26. At 4:4 we are told "Many of those who heard the word believed and the number of the men came to be about five thousand."

Conclusion: Jesus does not promise to heal all our diseases but He always forgives our sins and gives us strength to bear our illnesses.

1. At Mt. 5:20 Jesus says: "I say to you unless your righteousness is greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees you will by no means enter the Kingdom of heaven." Then He gives six examples of false righteousness in vss. 21-48. Our text is the fourth example, false swearing. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was merely external and mechanical, not from a heart that was born again. David said: "Create in me a clean heart, O God."
2. Vss. 33-37 distinguish a truthful heart from a deceiving heart. The repentant, believing Christian believes in Him Who is the Truth (Jn. 14:6) and therefore is truthful. Jesus says: "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Jn. 18:37. The impenitent person who rejects Jesus (Jn. 8:42-44) is of the devil and has a lying heart. To the believer God's name is precious and so he speaks the truth. To the unbeliever God's name is meaningless and so he speaks lies. In our text Jesus is not condemning the oath because of itself but is condemning the ABUSE of the oath. Hebr. 6:16 is an axiom for all cultures. God Himself swore, Gen. 22:16; Lk. 1:73; Hebr. 6:17, not to make Himself more truthful but because sinful man does not want to believe anyone, not even God. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob swore. See Gen. 14:22-23; 26:31; 31:53. Joseph too. Gen. 47:31. Jesus allowed Himself to be put under oath, Mt. 26:63,64. Paul swore. II Cor. 1:23. God commanded His children to swear when necessary. Deut. 6:13. See the Russian Catechism question and answer # 34, pages 57 and 58.
3. Vs. 33 of our text means: "You shall not break your oath but shall keep the oaths you have sworn to the Lord." The scribes and Pharisees had shifted the emphasis so that an oath in which the name of the Lord was not expressly mentioned was of lesser importance. One commentator says: "The Pharisees were careful not to swear a false oath when the name of the Lord was involved but hoped to deceive God and others by swearing by heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, by their own heads (vss. 34-46)." Another commentator says: "The scribes had a great deal to say about which oaths were binding and which were not, concluding that any oath which avoided using God's name was not binding (i.e., swearing by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or one's own head). The logic was that if God's name was not used, He had nothing to do with the transaction. Jesus declares that no man can keep God out of any segment of life; you cannot exclude His demand for truth by substituting something less sacred for the divine name. For the disciple, whose heart is pure and who always speaks the truth, there is no need for oaths. In civic life, however, because of the untruth in the world, the state, which has to deal with all men, must often require oaths." Christians don't use oaths when they are baptized, married, ordained into the ministry. But when we deal with the world we do use oaths because the world does *not* believe mankind. When we testify in court, when we are inducted into public office or the army we take an oath because the unbelieving world very often believes no one. Christians believe each other. They don't need to use oaths.
4. In vs. 34 Jesus says: "Do not swear at all" but that is limited to vss. 35 and 36, cases in which people swore by something in creation, not by God's name. But Jesus is saying that you cannot separate God's creation from Himself. Vs. 36 shows man's utter powerlessness. He can't even change the color of one hair. Therefore, don't swear by your head. God is in complete control of it.
5. Zech. 8:16: "Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor." Cf. Eph. 4:25. Anything that goes beyond this simple command is of evil and of the devil, the father of lies. Jn. 8:44. In our text Jesus is talking about truth and deception, not about whether oaths are ever permissible. Like God and the Bible, Christians simply speak truth. When occasion demands it, as do God and the Bible, Christians use oaths.

Sermon Outline on Mt. 5:33-37, Trinity XII

Theme: JUST SAY "YES; YES; NO, NO"

Introduction: Ps. 116:11 says "All men are liars." They follow their father, the devil, who did not remain in the truth. Jn. 8:44. See Rom. 3:10-18. That's why God instituted the oath. People do not believe each other. The oath was given to make sure that people would believe each other. Even God took an oath so that people would believe. Hebr. 6:17. But sinful man twists the oath so that he can lie. That's what our text is about. We must avoid such twisting of oaths.

I-~~THE~~ NATURE AND SINS OF UNCOVERTED MAN

- A-The nature of unconverted man. Jesus once said "Out of the heart ~~come~~ wicked thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Mt. 15:19. He is speaking of ALL people. The unconverted man cannot control these sins. In fact, he denies or excuses them. I Jn. 5:19 reads "The whole world lies in wickedness." That is why natural, unconverted man is a born liar. Therefore, he does not trust other people. In this condition he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. He is of his father, the devil, who is nothing but untruth and is the father of lies. Jesus said to His enemies: "Because I speak the Truth, you do not believe Me." Jn. 8:45. The unconverted man hates the truth.
- B-The sins of unconverted man. In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus began by describing His own children, Mt. 5:1-16. From 5:20 to the end of chapter 7 Jesus warns people about their sins so that they can repent. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was not Christian. See vs. 20. They could not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Then He gives six examples: they thought that only murder (not hatred) was sin. They thought that only adultery (not lust) was sin. They thought that divorce for any reason was acceptable. They thought they could twist oaths so that they could lie. They misinterpreted "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" as moral, not political law. They said the Bible said "Love your neighbor but hate your enemy." Our text is about the fourth example. They thought they could tell lies under the guise of an oath if they would swear by heaven, the earth, Jerusalem or their head but not use God's name. Thus they violated the second commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain." Jesus is saying "You cannot separate God's name from creation when you take an oath. You can't even change the color of one hair." Their righteousness was totally sinful, delusion.

II-THE NATURE AND DEEDS OF THE CONVERTED MAN.

- A-The nature of converted man. When a person confesses his sins and believes in the Gospel he becomes a new creature. II Cor. 5:17. The old things have passed away. All is new. Read Eph. 2:1-10. The unconverted man is helpless, He is in the power of Satan and his sinful flesh. I Pet. 1:13-15 reads "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct." The Christian is still a sinner but he fights and controls his sin and lusts. Col. 3:5-11.
- B-The deeds of the converted man. He is a man of truth who listens to the voice of Jesus. Jn. 18:37. To him all things are pure. Tit. 1:15. He puts away lies and speaks truth. Eph. 4:23-25. Like God he is truthful and need not take an oath. He simply says "Yes" and "No." A false oath will do him no good. Oaths are not wrong but they should not be abused. The world abuses oaths and thus makes its guilt even greater. Just say "y^es" or "no". To go beyond this puts a person under the control of Satan.