

Sun 8th Sept - Communion - 2 Healings

James 2.1–10, 14–17

Mark 7.24–37

Here are 2 healing stories about Jesus - Woman with a daughter, deaf and mute man.

I wonder what questions or thoughts you have? Anyone?

Might be - are the stories linked in some way
why does Jesus call her a dog
why are the stories being told
What do they tell us about Jesus
shock - spitting on his tongue

All good - that's where to begin when we read a story in the Bible.

Now we need to gather some more information.

Parchment was expensive, this isn't like endless footnotes and links to you tube videos.

This is the bare minimum - just the fewest possible words you need to put it together

The scaffolding - now we have to build the house around it...

So more clues is this story told anywhere else in the other synoptic gospels - Matthew or Luke?

what comes before and after...

how would the original hearers have heard it

what would it be like to experience this

where did this happen?

Where is Jesus - do you have a map on your phone - look up Tyre and Sidon.

When we had an overhead projector I could project maps, but look I've got the next best thing - a 40yr old paper map!

So here is Israel, in Jesus time. Make sure your phone map shows it in Jesus time - its not the same place today!

This is the limit of Jewish territory, everything else is Gentile - not Jew.

And Tyre and Sidon - are way up here - and the decapolis is right round here - not in Isreal at all.

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Tyre and Sidon - they're Hamburg and Singapore - big trading cities, worldly, wealthy

Mentioned a few times - Isiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel - the big 3

They will fall when the Lord returns, they will be judged.

Also in Luke 10:14 - repent

Jesus has taken his disciples way into Gentile territory
Tell them the Messiah is coming to the Gentiles as well as the Jews
He has made his disciples unclean by being with the Gentiles.

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What comes before..

Jesus talking in Jerusalem, the holy Jewish city - about what makes people clean and unclean, about rules of purity and holiness. And he's saying the Pharisees have got it wrong.

It's not the stuff on the outside - the washing of cups for food, or things from outside

But things from inside.

Interesting then - he goes to a very unclean place - full of Gentiles.

Jews aren't even supposed to go there, not supposed to talk or eat or touch a Gentile.

And this is a Gentile woman! This is so unclean. And he's made all his disciples unclean just by going there. They'd be eating all sorts.

And afterwards it says he went to the Decapolis - more Gentile territory

And he feeds the 4000 - not the 5000! The 4000 Gentiles!

And he has 7 loaves and collects 7 baskets.

When Israel left Egypt and came to Canaan, with Joseph and the 12 tribes -

Well there were 12 tribes - which became 10 nations - and 7 Gentile nations that once occupied Canaan.

So we have Jesus teaching about what is clean and unclean to Jews.

Then he goes to a Gentile area and heals 2 Gentiles

Then he comes to another Gentile region and feeds them.

This is not just a nice story, or a random thing - this is all put together, planned, meaningful

And if God planned it, and Jesus obeyed it, and people wrote it

In order to say something, to have a meaning - then we should do our best to look for those meanings...

So you may have noticed I missed the first question - is this in the other synoptic gospels - we put John to one side.

I have this big gospel parallels book - but a good website like Bible Gateway will let you get different passages up next to each other.

And we can see that it doesn't come in Luke, only in Matthew.

And the disciples try to shoo this woman.

And yet Jesus commends her for her faith.

And the deaf story is nowhere else in the Bible - only here in Mark. I wonder why?

And we know that Matthew and Mark are Jewish gospels - they quote the old testament, assume a knowledge and interest in Jewish things, whilst Luke is more gentile, he shows Jesus with the wise men, talks about roman buildings with tiled roofs - misses out the more Jewish stuff.

So why would a gospel to the gentiles miss out these stories of gentile inclusion, and the Jewish ones keep them in?

Because it's the Jews that need to be convinced to share their messiah, to stop being so inward looking. The Gentiles who read Luke already know they're part of the kingdom, that Jesus died for them.

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So - now we know some more stuff. More context, more background to the picture.

What does it tell us / you about Jesus - and by connection - God.

(And I know this is unfair, because these stories have more than one meaning, and this might have raised personal things for you)

Does it make you think about God's power - to heal

Gods' desire to heal, to take away the burdens or the extra ordinary difficulties

Jesus doesn't do magic and get all the harvest in with a click of his fingers

People don't say - please Jesus do the washing up or the cleaning - life is full of difficulty and challenge - but sometimes they're extraordinary, unfair - having an evil spirit or mental health issues, or not being able to speak and hear.

What else does it tell us about God?

Care for the common person - not rich or famous

even the gentiles are loved

even a woman is heard

even a child is worth saving

even a deaf / mute person

What else?

There are no conditions - healed if you do this or that

healed if you have enough faith

the woman wants it and comes to ask - the child doesn't

does the deaf man want it or not?

And our Response to all this...

Praise - that God did and does amazing things - setting people free

Joy - fro those people whose lives are transformed

thanksgiving - that such a powerful god cares about all of us

- even you and me

care enough to love us, heal us and die for us

and ... is there just a little encouragement to ask for things for ourselves or for others?