

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 35:4-7a

4 Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.” 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; 7 the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

35:4 *anxious heart* – In Hebrew: “To those who are hasty and speedy in heart,” who are not steady and firm but want to run away and give Satan the victory. (Luther)

Be strong, fear not. Cf. God’s words of encouragement to Joshua in Jos 1:6–7, 9, 18. (CSB)

Command Isaiah uses elsewhere (8:12; 41:10, 13; 43:1; 51:7; 54:4). (TLSB)

In spite of the aforesaid worries and fears, God’s Word roars in with encouragement and hope. God is greater than the nations or anything that would turn our lives into a desert wilderness haunted by unclean things. Luther: “Though all devils were rolled into one, my God is greater still” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

In the previous chapter, the nations were invited to listen and pay attention to the revelation of the Lord’s anger. That announcement of judgment brought no comfort. Instead, the graphic, gory description was intended to shock and terrify. It did. Even believers may stand horrified by the graphic details, but no one ever comforted by the threats of God. So God has a different message for His people: “Be strong, do not fear.” It is the gospel message. How often the Scriptures give us that message. God does not wish to terrify and threaten. Through Christ, sins that deserve fierce punishment from God are forgiven. Through Christ, death becomes a sleep from which He will awaken us. The gospel steadies the weak hands and legs of His children when they have no power to go forward. (PBC)

We ought to strengthen ourselves with these words and say, “Though all devils were rolled into one, my God is still greater.” The afflicted must be comforted with such spiritual consolations of the Word, not with any fleshly comfort which does nothing for troubled consciences but with spiritual comfort and with the living Word of God they must be ruled and strengthened. (Luther)

God is greater than any country and any of our problems, even our hearts as stated in 1 John 3:20 “whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.”

Ephesians 6:10 “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.”

God will come. Similar language is used of the coming of the Messiah (see 62:11; cf. Rev 22:12). (CSB)

The believer is to take heart because God, Himself, will come! What’s more, His coming will not be quiet but powerful and with authority. Also God’s coming has a specific purpose – “He will come to save you!” To him who says, “He is too far away, I cannot reach him,” the beautiful answer is, “You do not have to reach Him; He comes to you. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

Psalms 27:1 “The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear?”

Isaiah 62:11 “The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your Savior comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.’”

Revelation 22:12 “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”

vengeance ... recompense. Do not avenge yourselves. He is the God of vengeance, He will fittingly requite them and save you. Thus we see that vengeance always comes before they carry out their plan. So Jerusalem, opposing the Word, was stormed by the Romans; then Rome perished. Thus the Spirit comforts us, as if to say, “Remain godly and constant and be lifted up. The Lord will come in time of trial, and He will avenge and save you.” So he comforts the church that is exceedingly hateful to the world and Satan and besides does not shine with outward splendor. On the contrary, it is pressed down by a very heavy cross; it is also beset and harassed by a variety of internal evils, such as weakness of faith and falling into sin. Beyond all these, Satan, the tempter, fights against it. (Luther)

will come and save you – The Lord of glory comes to strengthen and lead them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

35:5 *then* – This word sets off the natural result of God’s rescue and restoration. When God intervenes, there is no question about it – blessings will come forth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

eyes ... ears. † Quoted by Jesus (Mt 11:5). Cf Is 29:18; 30:20–21. (TLSB)

God’s salvation mentioned in verse 4 does the healing. When Jesus did miracles of healing he was declaring the presence of the messianic age in himself. While he did not heal everyone while he was on earth the spiritual healing was done in his resurrection and was for all people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

Notice that no freedom from oppression is mentioned here, only the fact that a new era, a new abundant life, is ushered in with God’s coming. Certainly, freedom from external oppression is part of God’s total promise (cf Is 43:14; 48:20), but aside from the more important divinely given inner restoration, physical freedom can be a curse or a blessing. With God’s restoration and deliverance, God’s people can and will endure through the many challenges in their lives (Phil. 4:13). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

In that time when the church will flourish in the midst of drought and will be cultivated in the desert, the blind will see plainly, etc. This is taken literally with reference to the miracles of Christ and the church, as we read in the last chapter of Mark (Mark 16:17, 18), signs that were necessary to confirm the new Word, signs that were added to the glory of the church, signs that are not done physically in the last time of the church, now that Christ is no longer weak. They were necessary then as a witness to the Jews, who ought to have recognized the church of God. Allegorically, in the time of the Gospel there were opened (1) *the eyes of the blind*, or ignorant, as we see happening today; (2) *the ears of the deaf*, who now accept the Gospel; (3) *the lame* walking in their own superstitions, as Isaiah calls all idolaters lame, people who walk around in some sect of their own. They limp on one leg. They do not walk in an upright faith. Then, however, when they accept the Word by faith, they walk upright and leap for spiritual joy in Christ. (4) *And the tongue of the dumb sing for joy*, namely, it will glory in a strong confession, and the mercy of the Lord shown to us is proclaimed and boasted; and they will say: “See how God has rescued us from the darkness!” (Luther)

35:6 *lame leap ... tongue of mute.* † Quoted by Jesus to show that he was the Messiah (Mt 11:5). (CSB)

The people of the Bible considered both those who infirm and the desert wilderness to be in the clutches of death – barren and worthless (2 Sam 9:8; Jer 2:6; Jn 9:2). This prophecy had at least partial fulfillment in Jesus’ ministry (Mk 7:31-37; Luke 7:22; John 7:37). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

Water ... streams. † Cf. God’s provision of water in Ex 17:6; 2Ki 3:15–20. (CSB)

In a land as dry as Israel, water poignantly symbolizes life and salvation (Jer 2:13). New life blossoms where once only dreariness, misery, and death could be found. Note that the water does not simply appear, but it “gushes forth” (“breaks out” KLV, ASV; “burst forth” NKJV). There is no stopping it once it appears. As the life-giving waters flow where they will, so do they renew the dead and barren. Water changes the desert. So does Jesus, the “living water” (Jn 4:10-11), rescue and restore those who have “forsaken” the Lord, the spring of living water” (Jer 17:13) and are entrapped in the wilderness of sin and death. He will lead them to “springs of living water” (Rev 7:17), where perfect eternal peace will reign. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

That is, they are parted and distributed. As a spring flows forth in moistening streams, so this church, which was desert, should gush out in streams of the teachings of the Gospel, always one stream leaping from another into one city and then another, although in the eyes of the world it might seem forever desert. (Luther)

35:7 *burning sand* – Images of a desert mirage might come to mind when considering the various translations of this phrase; “parched ground” (KJV; NKJV); “glowing sand” (ASV). A mirage is nothing but a bitter, disappointing illusion that water is present in the place where it is most needed. The false hope that the world offers to those wandering in the desert of sin is only that – false and fruitless. When examined closely, the civic righteousness of men, the false promises of the world, and the deceitful lies of Satan reveal themselves for what they really are. However, God’s promise is real. Through God’s unbreakable promise to His people, the mirages of our world will fade away and be replaced by a real lake of “living water.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

springs. The picture here is the wonderful change that the coming of the Lord would bring. It is a wonderful spiritual transformation. The change in the heart of every believer is such a miraculous transformation. Where there was death because of sin, life springs up by faith in the Messiah – cool, refreshing life, sustained by the Holy Spirit through the gospel. (PBC)

That is, where formerly there was total dryness, there will now be not only streams but also pools and springs. Thus the church will grow in such a way that elsewhere and in other places our streams will become springs. The Word of God will come in abundance. (Luther)

reeds and rushes. Plants that grow in marshes and lakes (cf. 19:6–7). (CSB)

Dragons and serpents like above all to be in dry places, as we see from experience today. As this was formerly a desert, most dreadful in dryness, but now because of the exceeding abundance of moisture has become a place where reeds and rushes grow, so there was nothing but heat, dryness, and ungodliness as long as the Word was absent, but now with the preaching of the Word it is moist and joyful. The serpents and dragons are those who teach ungodly things and with their most pestilential teachings take possession of men’s souls and consciences, whom also Christ calls a brood of vipers (Matt. 23:33). (Luther)

35:8-10 For similar descriptions of the messianic age and its consummation at the end of time, cf 11:6–12; 40:1–11; 41:17–19; 43:14–21; 48:20–21; 65:17–25. (TLSB)

EPISTLE -James 2:1-10,14-18

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. 2 For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, 3 and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” 4 have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called? 8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.

2:1 *my brothers show no partiality.* God does not show favoritism—nor should believers. (CSB)

Unfair act of judgment based on worldly criteria (cf 1:27). God never shows partiality (Rm 2:9–11), and His people are commanded to act similarly. (TLSB)

The Greek word for favoritism (*prosōpolēmiskia*, v 1, and the verb in v 9) comes from the Septuagint’s translation of the Hebrew idiom *nasa panim* “to lift up [someone’s] face,” “to receive favorably or show favor to.” God does not show favoritism (Rom 2:11), but treats all the same. Consequently, those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—who have been reborn with his new life (1:18)—are to live as he does. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

prosōpolēmpsiais, literally “receiving faces,” that is, showing partiality based on outward appearances. This is called sin in v 9. *echete tēn pistin tou kyriou*. James is addressing specifically those in the faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

Lord of glory. Glory is a result of Christ’s victorious resurrection and exaltation (cf Lk 24:26). (TLSB)

Jesus is described as the Christ of glory. Because of the Semitic character of James’ letter, “glory” may refer to God’s visible presence, as in Rom 9:4 (see Exod 16:7, 10—God’s glory in the cloud—and the post-Biblical Jewish concept of the Shekinah). Jesus is the “radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Heb 1:3). Paradoxically, the glory of God was concealed in the Man who suffered and died on the cross. He was despised by the world but exalted by the Father. Similarly, Christians must not judge by external appearances or by the standards of the world which failed to discern Christ’s glory and rejected him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

It is a peculiar fact that history repeats itself, that the same conditions seem to be found in the Christian congregations after just about so long a time of Gospel preaching. The apostle does not hesitate to attack the evil with all the power at his command: My brethren, not in respect of persons hold the faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord of Glory. The Christian faith must not be abused, nor dare shame and disgrace be brought upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and the King of Glory. The reference is probably to the fact that the second person of the Godhead was present in the cloud of glory which accompanied the

children of Israel on their journey through the wilderness and afterward appeared at the dedication of the Temple of Solomon. Such a condition of affairs, however, such servile regard of people, altogether out of agreement with the spirit shown by Jesus Christ in His treatment of men, had crept into the churches. Men were not regarded on the basis of their Christianity, their moral excellence, their personal piety, their usefulness to the congregation, but on the basis of the wealth which they had accumulated. (Kretzmann)

2:2-4 Who is the rich man who comes into the assembly? Reicke (*The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, The Anchor Bible) sees the man with “splendid garments” and the gold ring as a non-Christian Roman politician who, by his presence, seems beneficial to the church. *Lange’s Commentary* (p. 74) sees him as a symbol of Jewish Christians who wear their “covenant right” pretentiously. The desire for the important seats in the synagogue, so typical of the Pharisees, was condemned by Jesus (Matt 23:6). More important than whom exactly James was speaking of is the question, “Who is our rich man who causes division in the church today?” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

Jesus warned that a “kingdom divided against itself will be ruined and a house divided against itself will fall” (Luke 11:17). Discrimination, and the resulting divisions, common among unbelievers (Rom 1:21), are denounced. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

Example of partiality. Such distinctions are evil because they do not reflect the way God views people. James frequently singles out the rich for condemnation and describes the humble and poor as exalted by the Lord (cf 1:9–10; 4:6, 10; 5:1–6). Partiality either to the poor or the wealthy is condemned in Lv 19:15. (TLSB)

2:2 assembly. The Greek for this term is the origin of the English word “synagogue.” (CSB)

A person’s appearance communicates his status. (TLSB)

2:3 at my feet. Lowest position. (TLSB)

The text pictures a meeting, an assembly of worship, as it was held in those days. In steps a man whose wealth and influence is apparent at first glance. He is bedecked with gold rings, he wears the fine white garment which was assumed by rich Jews. Hardly has he entered the door, when the members crowd forward to meet him. With obsequious deference they place the best seat in the room at his disposal, their faces, at the same time, displaying the admiration for wealth and power which fills their hearts. But immediately after there steps in a poor man, clad in a simple garment, perhaps even soiled with the labor of his hands. There is no deferential ushering as he apologetically tries to find a place where he may stay. Instead, he is curtly told that he may stand in the room reserved in the rear; or, if that does not suit him, he may sit down on the floor. Note: History repeats itself also in this, that these very conditions obtain in many so-called Christian houses of warship to this day. (Kretzmann)

2:4 judges with evil thoughts? Wealth-based distinctions between people do not reflect God’s vision and are therefore evil. (TLSB)

But the apostle gives his opinion of such behavior in sharp words, telling his readers that they are thereby making a false distinction, a wrong and foolish discrimination, that they are dividing the congregation of the Lord into parties without the consent of the Lord, in a manner which in no way accords with His own acceptance of publicans and sinners. Incidentally, men calling themselves Christians and yet acting in such a manner become judges according to evil surmisings, according to false considerations. To judge a man by his outward appearance only and to condemn him on account of his poverty is to defame him both in thought and deed, an act very decidedly at variance with the Eighth Commandment. (Kretzmann)

They are making “distinctions” among themselves, differentiating according to appearances, and therefore judging wrongly. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

2:5–13 James gives three arguments against showing favoritism to the rich: 1. The rich persecute the poor—the believers (vv. 5–7). 2. Favoritism violates the royal law of love and thus is sin (vv. 8–11). 3. Favoritism will be judged (vv. 12–13).

2:5 *Has not God chosen those who are poor ... ?* See Lk 6:20; 1Co 1:26–31. (CSB)

A person’s worth comes not from possessions but from his relationship to God. (TLSB)

There is a higher standard for judging people. What counts before God is being rich in faith. This wealth has been given to those poor in the world’s eyes—the “poor in spirit” (Matt 5:3). They have been chosen by God so as to shame the wise and strong, that no one may boast before God (1 Cor 1:26–31). James’ purpose is not to condemn all who are wealthy, but to rebuke and correct the attitude of favoring those who have money and power, since this attitude creates division in the church and prevents love for one’s neighbors (i.e., those in need, Luke 10:36–37). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

In solemn warning the apostle calls out: Listen, my beloved brethren: Did not God choose the poor according to this world, rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him? This fact the readers should consider, of that they should never lose sight. It is the poor people in this world’s goods, the weak, the foolish, that God has chosen, 1 Cor. 1, 27. 28. The wise and mighty of this world are inclined to sneer at the Gospel of the poor Galilean fishermen and of the Nazarene that died on the cross. Therefore the Lord has chosen the poor, not because their hearts by nature are any better than those of the wealthy and mighty, but because they at least have not the handicap which riches are apt to prove to contend with. And it is the Lord’s choosing which has made the poor rich in faith, which has assured them of the inheritance of the saints in light, the glorious reward of mercy in heaven above, which God has promised to those that love Him. (Kretzmann)

the kingdom. The kingdom that is entered by the new birth (Jn 3:3, 5) and that will be consummated in the future (Mt 25:34, 46). (CSB)

As the Father’s adopted children, we will inherit His kingdom (Gal 4:1–7), where we will live with Him and receive the crown of life (Jas 1:12). (TLSB)

2:6 *dishonored the poor* – Reproachfully the apostle therefore writes: You, however, insult the poor, both dishonoring and despising them. (Kretzmann)

Exalting the lofty person dishonors the humble, whom God has exalted (1:9; 4:10). (TLSB)

rich the ones who oppress – In this connection the apostle reminds the Jewish Christians of another fact: Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before their tribunals? Do they not blaspheme the excellent name which was laid upon you by your call? He speaks of the rich people as a class, characterizing them by the behavior which is commonly found where they have the power. They make use of violence, they oppress those that are not in their own class, they try to lord it over them at all times; they foster lawsuits, believing that their money will buy them the decision which justice would never render. (Kretzmann)

This is not persecution for being a Christian, but lawsuits for economic reasons as in Acts 16:19-24; cf. 1 Cor. 6:1-8. (TLSB)

2:7 *blaspheme the honorable name.* Christ's name (v 1). Rejecting the poor man, who was chosen by Christ, is rejecting Christ Himself. (TLSB)

by which you were called? Or, "invoked over you," referring to Baptism (1:18). (TLSB)

And altogether too many of them will not believe that they are in need of the Savior and His redemption, they blaspheme the name of Him that called the Christians by faith, and added them to the communion of saints. The conduct of the believers, therefore, in acting with a false deference to all the wealthy people, is all the more reprehensible. (Kretzmann)

to kalon onoma to epiklēthen eph' umas, literally "the good name having been called on you." Those in the faith have been called children of God and have been called to do good works. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

2:8 *royal law.* The law of love (Lev 19:18) is called "royal" because it is the supreme law that is the source of all other laws governing human relationships. It is the summation of all such laws (Mt 22:36–40; Ro 13:8–10). (CSB)

"Royal" is the same Gk word as "kingdom" (v 5), indicating this is the "Law of the Kingdom"; that same Law is interpreted and fulfilled in Christ. Jesus quotes and applies Lv 19:18 frequently; cf Lk 10:25–37. (TLSB)

James affirms the high teaching of Lev 19:18. Love is the fundamental attitude required toward all, according to the "royal" law—the Old Testament as well as the New. This is the law of the one true king, Jesus Christ. Doctrinally, it really is Gospel, not Law (see on 1:25 in the previous article; the "Introduction to James"; and Matt 22:34–40; John 13:34). Love, of course, cannot be coerced by the threats of the Law; it can only be elicited by God's love in the Gospel. One needs to distinguish Law and Gospel carefully when preaching on the terms *law, commandment*, etc., since these can be Gospel terms in Scripture. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The apostle, then, offers this conclusion: If, indeed, you fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, you do well; but if you have respect of persons, you commit a sin, and are convicted by the Law as transgressors. There is a royal law, a rule of the Kingdom, which should be heeded also by Christians as expressing the will of God, namely, the precept that they should love their neighbors as themselves, making no distinction between rich and poor, between fashionable and unimportant. Such conduct is well-pleasing to God. (Kretzmann)

2:9 *convicted by the law.* Since partiality breaks the specific command of Lv 19:15, the general law to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lv 19:18) is also broken. (TLSB)

But if the Christians make such false distinctions as outlined by the apostle above, preferring the rich and influential merely on account of their money and not on account of their Christian life and moral worth, then they are transgressing the will of God and stand convicted by Him and by His Law, which will then apply once more. It is a willful, conscious sin of which they will be guilty, and there will be no excuse for them. It is a warning which will bear repetition in our days. (Kretzmann)

Once again, James affirms Old Testament ethics as appropriate for guiding Christian living. The prohibition of favoritism occurs also in Lev 19:15, where the NIV translates “do not show . . . favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.” Those who sin in this way are called “lawbreakers,” people who have crossed over the line, transgressors. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

2:10-12 To keep the whole Law is to “guard” it against violation. Yet, if a person stumbles over one aspect of the Law, he or she is outside the Law and thus guilty of breaking it all (cf. Matt 5:19). You cannot claim a place in the kingdom because you kept most of the Law. As often, James echoes Jesus’ teaching of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:22): that failing to love all your neighbors on an equal basis demonstrates lovelessness and invites judgment by the law (Gospel!) that provides mercy for all. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

2:10 *guilty of all.* The law is the expression of the character and will of God; therefore to violate one part of the law is to violate God’s will and thus his whole law (cf. Mt 5:18–19; 23:23). (CSB)

Because all Commandments come from God, all must be obeyed perfectly. This was made clear in the giving of the covenant to Israel (Dt 27:26; 28:15), as well as by Jesus. Even one violation falls short of the righteousness God requires (Jas 1:20). When we break God’s Law, we disrespect Him, for He established that Law. (TLSB)

The solidarity, the unity of the will of God is here brought out. For in connection with the fact that a carnal preference of persons is a transgression of the holy will of God, the apostle argues: For whoever keeps the whole Law, offends, however, in a single thing, has become guilty of all. A person might argue that an offense of the kind as explained by the apostle really did not amount to much, that the fault, if it might be designated so, would surely be overlooked by God. But as a matter of fact, he that transgresses, stumbles, becomes guilty in any single point pertaining to the Law of God, no matter how insignificant it might seem by comparison, is considered a transgressor of all. To profane one commandment means to have broken all. (Kretzmann)

14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18 But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

2:14–26 In vv. 14–20, 24, 26 “faith” is not used in the sense of genuine, saving faith. Rather, it is demonic (v. 19), useless (v. 20) and dead (v. 26). It is a mere intellectual acceptance of certain truths without trust in Christ as Savior. James is also not saying that a person is saved by works and not by genuine faith. Rather, he is saying, to use Martin Luther’s words, that a man is justified (declared righteous before God) by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. Genuine faith will produce good deeds, but only faith in Christ saves. (For more information on justification see note on Ro 3:24.) (CSB)

During the Reformation, this passage became controversial because some interpreters viewed it as teaching justification through faith and works (synergism). Critical interpreters have viewed the passage as evidence that the apostles James and Paul taught conflicting doctrines. The notes here carefully consider the text, revealing that James is addressing a misunderstanding about faith (v 14) and for that purpose uses some terms differently than the apostle Paul, though not in conflict with Paul’s teaching. (TLSB)

2:14-17 The Christian faith is a living, active faith. It reflects the same mind, spirit, and attitude as Christ (Phil 2:1–11). If it does not, it is really not faith at all. James provides a single illustration to demonstrate the hypocrisy of such “faith.” (*The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, p. 444, sees the “blessing” in v 16 as possibly a misapplication of Matt 6:25f.) Such faith obviously is not of Christ, for the believer in Christ seeks life, shares life, and is rewarded with the crown of life (Rev 2:10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

2:14 *someone says he has faith.* To this point, faith has been viewed positively (1:3, 6; 2:1, 5). In 2:14–26, James uses “someone” else’s definition of faith, which separates faith or belief in God from faithful living (v 18). Even demons have this kind of “faith” (v 19). Jesus likewise condemns those who “say” but do not “do” (Mt 23:1–6).(TLSB)

faith. Gk *pistis*. Usually used to mean trust, but here James means mere knowledge of a subject. (TLSB)

works? Actions done in response to justification, e.g., care of the needy (vv 15–16). (TLSB)

Can that faith save him? Mere intellectual assent is not saving faith, nor does it produce fruit in response to God’s gifts. (TLSB)

This passage is not opposed to Rom. 3, 21-28, but offers the opposite side of the question, the key to the entire discussion being given in v.17. The apostle first of all asks a challenging question: What is the advantage, my brethren, if one says he has faith, but has no works? Can that faith save him? The apostle here characterizes a person that has mere knowledge of the head, of the mind, concerning the facts of salvation, but is without the faith of the heart which is bound to be active in love. Real faith, saving faith, without some evidence of its presence in the heart, is unthinkable. Such faith has nothing in common with saving faith; such faith is a delusion and vanity. (Kretzmann)

2:15-17 In order to bring out his point, the apostle illustrates: If a brother or sister is ill clad and destitute of daily food, one of you, however, should say to them, Go your way in peace, be warmed and fed, but you would not give them the necessaries of the body, what good would it be to them? Here is a concrete case, which is met with all too often, also in our days of vaunted charity. A brother or a sister may be found in actual want, actually destitute of the needs of the body, insufficiently clad, undernourished or not nourished at all, and yet some people are satisfied with a pious wish that God would take care of their needs. If such a wish is made by one that is able to help, and there is actual need, then there is only one conclusion possible, namely, that such a person knows nothing of the real faith of the heart as it is bound to be active in love, in good works for the help of one’s neighbor. In a case of this kind the pious wish is an example of the rankest hypocrisy; for nothing but selfishness is able to neglect dire necessity as it is brought to the attention in circumstances of that kind. (Kretzmann)

2:15–16 This illustration of false faith is parallel to the illustration of false love found in 1Jn 3:17. The latter passage calls for love in action; this one calls for faith in action. (CSB)

poorly clothed. Lit, “naked.” Parallels Jesus’ teaching about the sheep and the goats (Mt 25:35–36). The needs of the neighbor are immediate and obvious. Mere lip service or empty, pious blessings accomplish nothing for those in need, nor do they reflect faith. (TLSB)

2:17 *faith.* The kind of knowledge described in vv 14, 19. (TLSB)

by itself. The issue here is wrongly separating faith from its natural fruit: good works (cf vv 18, 26). (TLSB)

2:18-19 If the Concordia/NIV Study Bible note is correct—that this verse quotes those who claim that there are “faith” Christians and “deeds” Christians—then James’ response may be that just as deeds expose faith, so faith exposes itself through deeds. Such “works” do not earn salvation, but rather are the natural product of true faith in Christ, “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The belief that God is one is the Old Testament creed, the Shema (Deut 6:4). James says that merely assenting to the creed is insufficient, since even the devils understand clearly enough who God is. Mark 1:24 is a clear illustration of this—the unclean spirit knew exactly who Jesus was. Knowledge alone does not save. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

2:18 *You have faith; I have deeds*. The false claim is that there are “faith” Christians and “deeds” Christians, i.e., that faith and deeds can exist independently of each other. (CSB)

Argument of those whom James is rebuking in this section. (TLSB)

Show me your faith without deeds. Irony; James denies the possibility of this. (CSB)

You have faith and I have works. Reverse of v 17. One cannot have right faith without the response of right works, nor can one do good works without faith. The problem is not that faith must have works to be real, but that some have separated faith from works (and works from faith). Faith cannot be separated from the response of works because the works naturally flow from the faith God plants. Cf 1:22–27. (TLSB)

The conclusion will therefore stand: Even so also faith, if it has not works, is dead, being by itself. Works are a necessary concomitant, an inevitable fruit of real faith. Spurious, hypocritical faith, then, being without works, is no faith; or if one wishes to assume that there was faith at one time, it is certain that such faith has died and is no longer able to bring forth real fruit in the shape of good works. A faith by itself, without good works, is simply unthinkable. (Kretzmann)

GOSPEL – Mark 7:31-37

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. 34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” 35 And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

6:14-8:30 The new section introduced by Ch 6:14 and extending to Ch 8:30 focuses upon a period during which Jesus was frequently in retirement beyond the borders of Galilee. During the mission of the Twelve, Mark calls attention to the reaction of Herod Antipas, who has heard of the mighty works of Jesus. Herod’s suspicion that Jesus is John returned from the dead (Ch 6:14-16) introduces the parenthetical account of the imprisonment and execution of the Baptist (Ch 6:17-29). At the return of the

Twelve Jesus withdraws to a solitary place, pursued by multitude. In compassion He provides bread in the wilderness, and five thousand are fed (Ch 6:35-44). A second feeding of four thousand is reported in the region of the Decapolis (Ch 8:1-10), and the striking recurrence of the word “bread” throughout this section provides the pervading motif (Chs. 6:52; 7:2, 28; 8:14 ff). The importance of the two feeding miracles is emphasized when the disciples’ own misunderstanding of Jesus are traced to their failure to understand the significance of the abundant provision of bread. While a single instance of the public teaching occurs in Ch 7:1-23, the accent falls on the instruction of the disciples, whose hardness of heart, unbelief and failure to understand is a prominent element in the record. A point of transition is provided by Ch 8:22-26 where the restoring of sight to a man who was blind signals the opening of the eyes of the disciples as well. A climax in Mark’s narrative is achieved in Ch 8:27-29 when Jesus and His company approach Caesarea Philippi where Jesus’ dignity as Messiah is acknowledged for the first time. (Lane)

7:31-37 In the verses of Mark 7 that precede this reading, Jesus has been disputing with the Pharisees and scribes over what it is that defiles the sinner. The Pharisees and scribes have asked why Jesus ignores “the tradition of the elders” (7:3, 5) and eats with hands that are unwashed and thus spiritually defiled. Our Lord Jesus unmasks their hypocrisy and then makes the point that “evil things come from within, and they defile a person” (7:23). Our text follows immediately, with Jesus entering “the region of Tyre and Sidon” (7:24), a region inhabited by Gentiles. This is significant, since Gentiles would be people that the Pharisees and scribes considered defiled. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

This section of Mark is filled with Jesus traveling from place to place, teaching and healing. Both his words and his deeds point to his identity and his authority. Of course, the high point of this section is Peter’s confession in Mk 8:27–30. But we aren’t there yet. Jesus made quite a claim in 7:8 (“You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men”) and is backing his words up by loving, serving, teaching, and healing regardless of man-made designations of clean and unclean. Why? Because he is God incarnate. He is love incarnate. By doing all of these things, Jesus shows that he is the Son of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

Though Matthew 15:29-31 speaks about the same occasion as Mark 7:31-37, Mark alone records the plight and healing of this deaf-mute man. Evidently it happened just before the feeding of the 4,000. Look at Matthew 15:32-38 and Mark 8:1-9. (Buls)

7:31 *region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee.* Apparently Jesus went north from Tyre to Sidon (about 25 miles) and then southeast through the territory of Herod Philip to the east side of the Sea of Galilee. The route was circuitous possibly to avoid entering Galilee, where Herod Antipas was in power (see 6:17–29) and where many people wanted to take Jesus by force and make him king (Jn 6:14–15). Herod had intimated a hostile interest in Jesus (6:14–16). (CSB)

The verses just before our text tell the miracle that occurred in Tyre, a coastal city outside Israel where the people could lay no claim to God’s promises. Nevertheless, Jesus healed the girl born in Syrian Phoenicia, the daughter of a Greek woman. In that case Jesus did not touch, see, or hear the person who was healed by his power. The previous chapter includes several other healing miracles, the record that Jesus walked on water, and the feeding of the five thousand. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Lenski points out that Jesus is traveling on the outskirts to the southeast of the Sea of Galilee, where he had healed the demoniac and had contact with the Syro-phoenician woman. (See also Mt 15:21–39.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

Decapolis. Literally “10 cities”; this region lay southeast of the Sea of Galilee. (TLSB)

Ylvisaker: According to the better manuscripts, Jesus has journeyed farther north along the coast through Serepta to Sidon, after restoring the daughter of the Canaanite woman. Why this journey was undertaken Mark does not say. Possibly Jesus has desired to remain apart with his disciples for a protracted period, and has avoided the regions where He was known for this reason. (Buls)

Decapolis, ten towns, was a territory east and south of the Sea of Galilee. Before the conquest of Canaan it was inhabited by the Amorites. After the conquest it was known as Gilead and was inhabited primarily by pagan Gentiles. It was in this territory where Jesus permitted the unclean spirits to enter the swine and perhaps those who brought this deaf and dumb man were believers but that is not certain. (Buls)

Hendriksen: In dealing with people the Lord chooses his own methods. Naaman had to learn this lesson (2 Kings 5:10-14). And so did Jacob, much earlier (Genesis 42:36; 45:25-28). So did also Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 50:15-21). And so, later did Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). We should never try to tell God what methods he should use in answering our petitions. . . His own way is always best. (Buls)

Our text, like so many stories in the Bible, starts with an itinerary. Jesus went from one place to another. It's easy to skip by the geographical and chronological details. But they are important. This is not a "once upon a time" story. It happened in a certain place and at a certain time. God in Jesus Christ was there, a part of the events. "Decapolis" sounds too important. It would be better translated as "the ten towns." Jesus visited the area of ten small villages, so unimportant that the individual names were not recorded. Instead they were lumped together. Jesus practiced what he preached by going to the byways. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

The people in that area had heard about Jesus. Perhaps some of them had been among the 5,000 who ate the meal of bread and fish that Jesus had hosted. Maybe one of them had a neighbor whose brother-in-law had seen Jesus perform a miracle. The word had gotten around. The unnamed man who could not hear and could hardly talk did not come to Jesus. The people brought him. They had not been able to tell a deaf man about the miracle worker, so they had to bring the man to Jesus. Notice that the people who brought the handicapped man asked Jesus to put his hand on him. Jesus touched the bodily members to be cured, and even placed his own spittle on the man's tongue. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

As Jesus makes his way back to Galilee, he makes one last stop in the region of the Decapolis. Significantly, those whom the Jews would consider defiled are given the opportunity to witness a miracle of Jesus and be amazed by what he does. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

Decapolis was a region of Hellenistic, that is, Greek culture, and therefore predominately Gentile. Our Lord performed many miracles in Decapolis and also preached the word there. He again showed that Gentiles were not excluded from the kingdom of God. (PBC)

We do not know how long this journey from Tyre to Decapolis took. During this time when Jesus shuns the public eye, He devotes His time to instructing His disciples privately – a very important task, since they were to take the gospel out into all the world. (PBC)

Jesus had been in Decapolis once before (see 5:20). That time the people had asked Him to leave when they suffered the loss of a herd of pigs. But the demon-possessed man whom Jesus healed had gone throughout the area proclaiming Jesus' power and mercy. This witness, by just one man, brought a remarkable change. When Jesus returned, crowds gathered (see Matthew 15:30 and Mark 7:33) and brought their sick to Jesus. Mark related just one of the healings Jesus performed, undoubtedly the most striking one. (PBC)

7:32 *deaf and had a speech impediment* – Because those unable to hear have difficulty learning to speak correctly, it is probable that this man had been handicapped from birth. (TLSB)

He apparently suffered from a spasmodic condition of the tongue which can extend to the facial muscles as well. If the man had been born deaf and mute he would not have learned to speak and would possess no concept of language. This was not the situation. He had become deaf later in life apparently as a result of disease or injury and could speak only with great effort. Mark's use of an extremely rare word to describe the man's speech defect is almost certainly an allusion to Is. 35:5 FF, which celebrates God as the one who comes in order to unstop the ears of the deaf and provide song for the man of inarticulate speech. The fulfillment of the prophecy was expected in the Days of the Messiah in the exegetical tradition of the rabbis. By means of the biblical allusion Mark provides his readers with a sign that the promised intervention of God took place in the ministry of Jesus. (Lane)

Only Mark reports this specific encounter. The man's verbal abilities were extremely limited (*mogilavlo* is a hapax legomenon; see also the messianic prophecy in Is 35:6), able to produce only unintelligible sound. It is interesting to note that friends ask Jesus to lay his hands on the man, thinking that this was the way Jesus worked. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

"A man who was deaf and had a speech impediment" is brought to Jesus. *kōphos*, translated "deaf," can also be translated as "dull" or "blunt." *mogilalos*, translated as "a speech impediment," is sometimes translated as "mute." Most likely this man spoke with great difficulty and was hard to understand. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

lay his hand on him – This request indicates the presence of Jews or of Gentiles who were familiar with this Jewish practice in connection with blessing and healing. The great surprise exhibited by the people when the afflicted man spoke clearly suggests that they had not expected healing, but had brought the man to Jesus for His blessing. (Lane)

7:33-34 It is important to note that the healing of the deaf man takes place in connection with the spoken word of Jesus, not in connection with the physical touch of Jesus. Jesus apparently touches the man's ears and tongue in order to indicate to the man what he intends to do for him. Jesus then speaks the Aramaic command "Ephphatha," which means "Be completely opened" (author's translation). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

Six actions of Jesus, before He spoke the words of healing, are noted. Three aorist participles are each followed by an aorist verb in verses 33-34, giving us a total of six. (Buls)

- First Jesus took the man apart from the multitude by himself;
- Then He placed His fingers into the afflicted man's ears;
- Thirdly, Jesus spit.
- Fourthly, Jesus touched the man's tongue.

We are not told where Jesus spit. A few think He spit on the man's tongue. Most think Jesus spit on His own finger and then transferred it to the man's tongue. Lenski objects strongly to both. He calls it "sign language." But compare 8:23: "He spit on his eyes." Lenski missed this one. (Buls)

We note Jesus' compassion for this unfortunate man. He takes him apart from the crowd so that the man would rivet his whole attention on Jesus. (Buls)

7:33 *taking him aside* – Jesus took the man aside from the crowd to establish contact with him. He regarded the personal relationship between Himself and the sick to be of supreme importance, and in this instance all of His actions are intelligible in the light of the necessity of communicating with a person who had learned to be passive in life. (Lane)

Rather, Jesus takes the man into a private place to emphasize that his full attention will be on this man. He places his fingers into the useless ears. Then he spit (the minor action, participle) and touched the man's maligned tongue (the major action, finite verb). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

touched. Here, touch made communication easier. Jesus tended to use touch in His healings (cf 1:31, 41; 5:28–29, 41; 6:56; 8:25). (TLSB)

7:34 ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, “upon looking up into the sky”: This is an indication that Jesus is no “magic man”; rather, he is the Son of his heavenly Father, one who does the Father's will. This act is the first negation of a magical, folk-remedy understanding of what is about to happen. (CC)

he sighed – A physical sign of emotion. (TLSB)

Why did Jesus sigh? We agree with Luther that the sigh indicated Jesus' compassion for the people on whom Satan had worked so much havoc. Though a different and strong verb is used in the case of Lazarus, John 11:33 and 38, the situation is somewhat analogous. Jesus groaned in spirit because of Satan's strongest tool, death. (Buls)

Ephphatha! An Aramaic word that Mark translates for his Gentile readers. (CSB)

Aram word was used later in the Church's baptismal liturgies in order to emphasize the Spirit's power to open ears to the Gospel. (TLSB)

- Fifthly, Jesus looked up to heaven.
- Sixth, He sighed.

There is nothing in the text which indicates that Jesus, like Elijah and Elisha, prayed for strength so that He could perform the miracle. He did look to His heavenly Father but He was also true God. (Buls)

Now follows the climax of the account, the opening of ears and loosing of the tongue. "EPHPHATHA" is an Aramaic imperative. At Jesus' word two things happened immediately. Very likely the deaf man heard Jesus say this word. Mark gives the Greek for his Gentile audience. "Be completely opened." When a verb is used in more than one sense, the figure is call *zeugma*. We have a *zeugma* here. The two things which happened because of Jesus' word are recounted in the next verse. (Buls)

Looking up into heaven and sighing, Jesus speaks. With one little word, Jesus restores the man. The man hears and speaks. The man had nothing to do with the miracle. This was all Jesus' doing. The Greek word for “open,” *dianoivgw*, occurs also in Lk 24:45: “He opened their minds,” that is, Jesus taught his disciples the truth of Scripture concerning himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

7:35 *his ears were opened his tongue was released and he spoke plainly*. Jesus was doing what God had promised to do when he came to redeem his people (see Isa 35:5–6). (CSB)

Once the man's ears were healed, he was also able to speak clearly. He immediately put this gift to work in praise. (TLSB)

When a word is enclosed in the kind of brackets found here in the Greek text, the editors are indicating to the reader that it is difficult to determine whether the word should be read or not. At any rate, we are told that first his ears were opened, and then that which bound his tongue was loosed. The first indicates the completed end of a deed, the second that he began and continued to speak. "He spoke naturally." The word used for his condition in verses 32 and 37 does not necessarily mean that he was totally dumb. NIV: "Could hardly speak." NASB: "Spoke with difficulty." AAT: "Tongue-tied." Very often a tongue-tied person is practically dumb because it is so difficult to understand what he wants to say. (Buls)

The result is instantaneous. The man can hear and is able to speak plainly. Literally, the text says that "the band on his tongue was loosened or released" (author's translation). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

7:36-37 In these verses, we see that it is not only the deaf man whose tongue is loosened. In spite of repeated requests from Jesus "to tell no one," Mark records that "the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it." In v 37, we are told the reason for all the talk. The crowds are "abundantly amazed" (author's translation) by the miracle they have witnessed. They exclaim, "He has done all things well." *kalōs*, translated as "well," can also be translated as "good" and reminds the reader of the words of the creation story: "And behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). In the life and ministry of Jesus, something truly amazing is happening. The Lord has begun his new creation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

7:36 *tell no one* – Is Jesus speaking to one or two groups? Are the antecedents the same group of people? We think they are. Because of the parallel passage in Matthew 15:29-31, Bengel distinguishes antecedents for the two "them/they." He says that the first denotes the bearers and the second the spectators. But then, he thinks, the bearers joined the spectators in noising the report abroad. This is ingenious, but can't be proved. (Buls)

In each case we have an imperfect verb, both denote continued action. Their zeal to broadcast this miracle cannot be called good. They disobeyed Jesus. they were disobedient. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: These people had not yet reached the point at which they could correctly give witness about Christ or make His name known . . . Their enthusiasm was simply superficial and soon passed away. (Buls)

It amounted to momentary enthusiasm. (Buls)

Lenski: Matthew 15:30-31 reports that Jesus healed many more on this occasion: dumb, cripples, lame, and blind. A multitude was present, as Mark also reports in connection with the healing of the deaf-mute. The command not to report the latter miracle must thus be extended to include also the many others. Since Mark himself records no reason for this command of Jesus, we are left to figure this out ourselves . . . He has only a few months left, and He does not want the excitement to spread far and wide about his being the Messiah. The people generally connected earthly political ideas with that title, the very ideas which Jesus combated. So he did what he could to keep his miracles quiet at this time. But, as in this instance, he did not succeed. (Buls)

Hendriksen: Many Christ-admirers are lost. The true mark of discipleship is revealed in John 15:14. Compare John 8:31-32. These people were doing just the opposite. (Buls)

The first thing the man heard was a command from Jesus not to tell anyone how he had been healed. Not only could he talk, but he now had something to talk about. The people who had brought him to Jesus now had seen a real miracle in their own neighborhood. They didn't have to depend on the people from more important places to tell them. But Jesus also tells them to keep it under wraps. However, they ignored his direct command. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Why did Jesus tell the people not to report the miracle? Some want to think that Jesus used reverse psychology here. Tell them to keep it a secret, then they'll want to tell everyone. I cannot see Jesus using such a method. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

The fact is, Jesus did not want to be known only as one who could heal deaf mutes. He had a lot more to give than physical healing. The other people could already hear and speak. He had something for them too. Later the healed man could use his gift of hearing to learn that Jesus had died as the sacrifice to pay for the sins of the world. He could hear that Jesus, who died, lives again. Later he could use his newly functional vocal cords to tell of Jesus' greatest miracle: his destruction of sin and death. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Jesus instructs the crowds not to tell anyone about the healing. This was an earnest command, not some reverse psychology. Jesus knew that at this point in his ministry healings he did in love would not yet be grasped in their proper context. They were only penultimate; they were only glimpses of his ultimate act of love, going to the cross. Jesus knew that focusing on these would cause many to be disappointed in and reject his final purpose (cf. Jn 6:15, 66). Thus, while we can understand the crowd's refusing to obey his command to keep quiet, we must also recognize that refusal as sin. Now, of course, we see Jesus' miracles in the full context of the cross, and they become for us a powerful motivation to witness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

Jesus commanded the people not to tell anyone because the Jewish people of His day had a totally false, political conception of the coming Messiah. Christ made it clear that He had not come into this predominately Gentile territory to organize a political insurrection. He had come on earth to lay down His life as a payment for the sins of the world. He was determined to let nothing compromise the purpose for which He had come. (PBC)

Today the command not to tell anyone no longer applies. In fact, this one of the great miracles of our Lord which we are to proclaim so that others too may come face to face with the divine power and love of the Savior and turn to Him for all blessings, both temporal and spiritual. (PBC)

7:37 *he has all things well* – This summarizes all of Jesus' works. The Pharisees will demand more signs (8:11-12). The crowds were awed and remained positive toward Jesus but, like the disciples, did not truly understand who Jesus is. (TLSB)

The combination of adverb and verb is very strong. They were deeply moved. Very likely this indicates continued action, and manner. They showed their utter amazement by what they said. The verb they use indicates lasting results. "He is making." This coincides remarkable with the parallel passage in Matthew 15:29-31 where we are told that Jesus healed many sick people on this occasion. Mark gives but one example, but what the people say in 37 indicates that He healed others. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: By nature, we are all spiritually deaf and dumb. If we are to secure help from Jesus, He must take us apart from the people, He must speak His 'Ephatha' into our hearts. (Buls)

Lenski: Matthew reports that they glorified the God of Israel, thus indicating that most of these people were Gentiles. . . These people rightly conclude that at any time Jesus can make the deaf to hear and the speechless to speak. (Buls)

Luther: For that this poor man is hurt in this manner that he can use neither tongue nor ears, like other people, those are blows and thrusts of the accursed devil. Before the world it may seem, and everyone be of the opinion, that they be natural ailments; for the world does not know the devil that he does so much harm, makes the people mad and foolish, inflicts all manner of misfortune upon them, not only in the body, but also in the soul, that they die for terror and sorrow and cannot attain to true joy. But we Christians should deem such defects and infirmities nothing else but blows of the devil; he causes such distress on earth and does damage where he can. (Buls)

Luther: He refers especially to these two members, ears and tongue; for the kingdom of Christ is based upon the Word, which cannot otherwise be grasped or understood but through these two members, ears and tongue, and it reigns only through the Word and faith in the hearts of men. The ears take hold of the Word, and the heart believes it; but the tongue speaks and confesses, as the heart believes. Therefore if the tongue and the ears are removed, there is no noticeable difference between the kingdom of Christ and the world . . . With us, thanks to God, the tongue has gotten so far that we speak plainly, for there are everywhere pious people that hear the Word of God with desire. But aside from this there is also great ingratitude and terrible contempt for the Word of God, yea, secret persecution and secret suffering. (Buls)

Note what the people said about Jesus: “He has done everything well.” They had seen Jesus perform a miracle, but they thought it was the height of his ability. Jesus had done other good things not included in vv 33–34. He had come to the place of the ten towns. He was there with the suffering and needy people. He does that well—even today. He cared about people and he heard their requests. He does that well—even today. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

7:31–37 Jesus heals another person in a Gentile region, further emphasizing His love for every race and kind of people. This serves as yet one more example of why we need to avoid the temptation to narrow the scope of the mission and to ignore opportunities to reach out to those who are different than ourselves. Jesus’ healing of this man, immediately after He restored the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, underscores that He desires to love, cleanse, and heal all people. • Lord, You have done everything well. Help us also to see the depths of Your mercy and grace, that we understand them as gifts meant for all. Amen. (TLSB)