

Bible Reading Mark 3:20-35 Jesus accused by his family and by teachers of the law

²⁰ Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. ²¹ When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.' ²² And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.' ²³ So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: 'How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. ²⁷ In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house. ²⁸ Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.' ³⁰ He said this because they were saying, 'He has an impure spirit.' ³¹ Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. ³² A crowd was sitting round him, and they told him, 'Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.' ³³ 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' he asked. ³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a circle round him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.'

Mark 3: 20-35

A talk given by Rev David Eastwood on 27 June 2021

Last week we saw Jesus choosing the 12 – what for? To be **with him**, and to be **sent out**.

A family on mission – a family of disciples, disciples making disciples.

Jesus has already established his HQ in the home of Peter. And now Jesus is growing that family, that family on mission, that family with a purpose – to ultimately reach the entire world.

We turn now to a very difficult passage. John Wesley once said, the purpose of preaching is to disturb the comfortable, and to comfort the disturbed. Jesus is doing just that, here.

We are only in chapter 3, but again we see the **crowds** drawn to Jesus, flocking to Jesus after he has announced God's reign – Jesus eradicating the grip of disease and demons.

And already there are those conspiring against Jesus – this is the first reference in Mark to **the Scribes** (teachers of the law) the heavy weight theologians, who had travelled all the way from Jerusalem to shut Jesus down.

And we see **Jesus' own family**, whose job it is to calm it all down, to protect him, and his reputation.

So we have everyone unsettled, unnerved. And that's what we should expect because Jesus was here on a mission.

This is Jesus Christ, the Son of God Mark told us about, at the very beginning of his Gospel.

'The time has come', Jesus said, 'the kingdom of God is near'

What do people have to do – *'repent and believe the good news!'*

Three groups of people in this passage:

Jesus' family who say he is out of his mind, he's **mad**

The Scribes, the big guns, saying Jesus is possessed by the devil, to discredit him- ie he is a deceiver, he's **bad**

And then we have the **crowd**, who can't get enough of Jesus and invade his home, most likely the home of Simon Peter in Capernaum, and wondering if this is the **Holy One of God**.

CS Lewis said whoever Jesus was, no one can be left saying he was just a nice guy, a good moral teacher

These are the only choices you have – he was either mad, bad, or God. Lunatic, liar, Lord.

And people today say the same thing.

Jesus had come to build a family on mission – disciples to be **with him**, and to be **sent out** by him

This is our purpose as well – to be a family on mission – spending time with Jesus, learning from him, in order to be sent by him. Sundays, when we gather as a family, are to enable us, to equip us, to be sent out (scattered) as a family on mission in the week. We gather, to be scattered.

So how does Jesus tackle the opposition here? Jesus the peace maker, walking away? No, he tackles it head on.

With the Scribes, the clever ones, he replies with a parable: How can Satan cast out Satan?

A kingdom divided against itself, can't stand. A house (family) divided against itself, can't stand.

Satan's end has come. This is the Good News.

For Jesus to build his family on mission, he has to clear out Satan's house -

To bring Satan's reign, and the Scribes' reign, to an end.

Jesus is the stronger one, foretold by John the Baptist, (the one more powerful) to overthrow Satan.

The Scribes had made the people weary and heavy burdened, piling guilt upon them with their rules and regulations – do this, and don't do that, to earn God's acceptance, people held captive.

Jesus had come to offer pardon, to set people free – *'take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls.'* (Matthew 11:29)

A gospel of grace and acceptance – this is the good news –

Because Jesus forgives all our sins, and *'God remembers them no more.'* (Isaiah 43:25)

Jesus says - **'All** sins will be forgiven, but he goes on to say that whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven.' (Mark 3:28-29)

What is this unforgiveable sin?

Jesus is warning these Scribes that in saying he was of the devil, they were in danger of putting themselves in a position where they would become completely blind to the truth, and where there was no way back.

If you're troubled about committing the unforgiveable sin mentioned here, it's absolutely certain you haven't, simply because you are troubled about it.

Ministers with years and years of experience rarely come across anyone getting near to this.

The key message is this - Jesus has come to bring forgiveness from **all** our sins, to restore us, and to make us whole.

The passage today, begins and ends with his own blood family.

They think he's out of his mind and plan to take charge of him – to put a restraining order on him.

And the passage ends with his mother and brothers **outside** the house, whilst the crowds are **inside** the house

All his family can see is Jesus taking on the highest authority in the land – this is lunacy, we have to stop him, who does he think he is? We've got to silence him.

It's like Jesus is back from a red country, he must be quarantined and isolated, so we can protect him and ourselves, and carry on as normal. How does Jesus respond? In a shocking way.

He's already dismissed the religious elite as they are not part of his family - And now his own blood family, those closest to him. Jesus' love for his own blood family, never changed. He loved them as he loves us

And we are called to love our own families, no matter what.

But they had rejected him and weren't prepared to follow him, not now anyway.

And so Jesus sets out to build his family on mission –

Those who **would** follow him, those who **were** prepared to do God's will.

It's good this isn't the end of the story – Even whilst Jesus was on the cross, Jesus loved and cared for his mother who watched him die. Jesus said to his mother – *'Here is your son'*, and to his disciple John, *'Here is your mother.'*

And from that moment, John took Mary into his home.

And we know that Jesus' brothers and sisters also came to faith, probably after the resurrection.

(Jesus' brother James, became a leader in the church and wrote the letter 'James').

But here in this passage, we see Jesus redefining the family unit.

Who are my mother and brothers? Jesus asks - All those who do God's will, they are my mother and brothers.

Who hear God's word, and do what it says - Luke 8:21)

This is my now his family on mission

Jesus is sent by his Father in heaven, sent from a family, to expand that family here on earth.

He is the eldest son, but he is now calling his disciples, all of whom have the same heavenly Father as him.

Jesus is creating a family, and the mission of this family is to invite more people into the family.

A Family on Mission, is what God has always been

He is our Father, Jesus is our brother, and we are now part of his big family.

We love and serve our blood families

And we pray that they too, will be part of God's family on mission.

We've seen in Acts how Paul trained households, to live as families on mission, and this is the way the Christian faith spread like wildfire in the first few hundred years of the church's history.

And this is the adventure we are invited to go on!

Making disciples, and so building families on mission.

What a privilege that we belong to God's family, and to be able to call Jesus our brother.

AMEN

Questions to consider:

1. Lunatic, liar, or Lord? Do you agree these are the only choices for Jesus?
2. Jesus was misunderstood - his family thought he was mad, and the religious leaders thought he was bad.
What did they see in Jesus?
What should they have seen instead?
3. How would you have felt if you were Jesus' mother or brothers? (v 34-35)
4. What does it mean for you to belong to Jesus' family on mission?