

Mark 3:20-35 Final**3.18.18**

The Gospel of Mark

Sunday Morning

INTRO

You and I woke up this morning, came to church, and sang song with **total freedom of worship** and this due to the diligence of our founding fathers. They worked hard to give us the freedom we enjoy. But we need to **be careful** how much we consider them Christian examples.

For example, according to **one Smithsonian** publication:

Thomas Jefferson was devoted to the teachings of Jesus Christ. But he didn't always agree with how they were interpreted by biblical sources, including the writers of the four Gospels, whom he considered to be untrustworthy correspondents. So Jefferson created his own gospel by taking a sharp instrument, perhaps a penknife, to existing copies of the New Testament and pasting up his own account of Christ's philosophy, distinguishing it from what he called "the corruption of schismatizing followers."

Meaning that Thomas Jefferson found the Gospel writers to have portrayed Jesus' teaching as too divisive, so he took out what he didn't like and kept in what he did, which means that Jefferson wasn't really devoted to the teachings of Jesus at all.

A genuine disciple of Jesus **isn't free to place themselves** over him in authority, control him, or choose which teachings they want to accept. Instead, **a genuine disciple is one who trusts him so much that he or she joyfully sits at his feet and obeys his word.**

A genuine disciple finds himself or herself taking a posture of joyful subordination to the authority of Christ; meaning joyfully placing themselves in the **lesser position** as **learners, under his authority**, eager to **follow** and **obey him.**

And if you're like me, there are times when we do this **better than others.** There are times when we can find ourselves **functionally** acting like Thomas Jefferson, removing certain things that we don't like or want. We want to **tame Jesus' words**, limit his influence into **certain parts of our lives** that put **restrictions** or **demands** on us that seem too radical in concept or too hard intrusive into our lives.

But a genuine disciple of Jesus takes the posture not of **critical opponent**, but **joyful subordinate to him.** And we see this truth clearly in Mark 3, so if you haven't already, turn to Mark 3.

I'm going to read our text this morning beginning in verse 20 and if there's one thing I'd want you to remember from this passage it's this: **A genuine disciple of Jesus takes a posture of joyful subordination to Him.**

And church, here's the good news for us today, we can grow in taking this posture as we see that joyful subordination to him is available **only because of the cross and resurrection**, and as we **often sit at his feet and aim to do his will**, and as we **understand how patient he is with us in helping us get there**.

So, let's begin reading in verse 20:

[20] Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. [21] And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."

[22] And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." [23] And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? [24] If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. [25] And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. [26] And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. [27] But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

[28] "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, [29] but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"—[30] for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

[31] And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. [32] And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." [33] And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" [34] And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! [35] For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

That was the Word of the Lord to us this morning, may his words do in us what he wills.

So far in chapter 3 Jesus has been **in the synagogue**, at the **sea**, and **on a mountain** and now we see that he **goes home (a house)**. And the only house mentioned in Mark so far has been Andrew and Peter's house in Capernaum and it's assumed that this is where he is.

And as he enters Peter's house we see in **verse 20** that a crowd gathers again, and it's so large and packs itself so tightly into the house that we're told they didn't even have room to eat.

Now, this wasn't unusual for Jesus because he had been **attracting large crowds** of people wherever he went, he had been **preaching** all over the **region**, **casting out demons**, **healing people on the Sabbath**, and **forgiving paralytics** of their **sins**. And the crowds were so eager to be around him that Jesus and the disciples had **lost sleep** and at

times like this weren't **able to eat**; and his family hears about all of **this seeming insanity** and they decide that enough is enough with all **this craziness**. They decide to go and reign Him in a bit because he's coming across like a crazy person.

In fact, according to verse 21 they think: '**He is out of his mind.**' According to commentator William Lane, they thought he had "**psychiatric derangement**". In other words, Jesus' family heard all that was happening and had concluded that he had a **mental breakdown**. So to save Jesus and their own family name they set out to Capernaum to **seize him**:

- To put him **under control**
- To stop the **craziness** of his **ministry**
- And **tame** what is happening.

(NOTE): Now, let me **push the pause button** here for moment because I want you to notice that the **phrasing Mark uses in verse 21** to describe what his **family** was saying is the exact same **kind of phrasing** he uses in **verse 30** to describe what the **Scribes were saying**. That's **foreshadowing** and keep it in your minds as we go forward.

Now, here we see the first instance of Mark **using his signature literary** device to help tell a story:

- Mark **begins a story**: here the **family** story
- Then leaves the story: here in verse 21 as the family sets out to get Jesus
- He then tells **another seemingly unrelated** story: here about the Scribes in the middle verses (22-30)
- And then **returns to the original story**: here the family in verse 31.

We'll see this over and over again in Mark as we go. When he does this, the **middle section** of the story always helps us understand the outer sections. They often don't seem related but they can't be understood without each other.

So, it would be helpful to insert the word **Meanwhile** after verse 21.

So, his family sets out and **meanwhile**, in verse 22, the Scribes come down from Jerusalem. They were likely sent by the Sanhedrin, **who had heard about his ministry of casting demons out of people**, and the Scribes job was to try to **calm people down** about Jesus and **lessen the frenzy** that was surrounding him. We can see this because they don't come down and talk with Jesus, they choose rather to **simply begin talking** to the people in the town about him, telling them that Jesus was "*possessed by Beelzebul* (**Mark uses Beelzebul to mean Satan**) and *that Satan is the real power behind Jesus' ability to cast out demons*.

So they are calling Jesus a magician or sorcerer in an attempt to discredit him. They, like Jesus' family, are trying to **functionally seize him up**, put him **under control**, stop the **craziness of his ministry**, and **tame** what is **happening**.

But Jesus hears about it and calls them to himself. And what happens next is nothing short of a Scribal beat down.

We see in verse 23 that he begins speaking to them in parables, and in verses 25-26 he simply asks them what good would it do for **Satan to cast his own servants out of people?**

Think about it: if a **ruler places** his loyal subjects all over **his territory** and into **their homes to subdue and control the people, what possible good would it do the ruler** to send some other person to kick those same loyal subjects out of those territories and homes and not **replace them with other ones?** It would only weaken the power of that ruler over those under his control.

And Jesus calls out the stupidity of the claims and logic by concluding in verse 26:

[26] ...if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.

But he doesn't leave it at **discrediting their logic**, he goes a step further in verse 27 and lets them in on what is actually going on.

In verse 27 Satan is the strongman, and he says that:

But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

Nobody can enter Satan's kingdom and kick out his demons, freeing the people under their control, unless Satan is first bound and overpowered. And the claim Jesus is making is that since He is casting demons out of people, he must be the stronger man.

You see, the only person who can **bind a strong man** is a **stronger man**. And here Jesus claims to be just that, and this is a parabolic signaling that **His casting** out demons is the inauguration of the overthrow of Satan and his kingdom by the Kingdom of God Almighty.

And the Scribes should have **seen** it and **known** it. They knew better than to attribute any of these signs to demonic activity and yet they refused to posture themselves as subordinates to Him. They rather stood in opposition to Him and chose what they wanted to hear.

And this is why, in verses 28-29, Jesus issues a sober warning to the Scribes.

Notice that He begins with the phrase, *"Truly, I say to you..."* which is Jesus' strongest way of making sure **everyone listened** to what he was about to say. He is calling upon his own name to say something that is of utmost importance.

And he warns them that though all the sins of mankind are able to be forgiven including blasphemy, there is an eternal sin. And this eternal sin is **calling the Spirit of God Satan**, and this is what they were doing in verse 30:

"—[30] for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

And they should have known better.

And here, we pick up the family story as the confrontation and warning end and Jesus' family arrives.

And as they arrive, the house is **so crowded** that they can't even get in. So, they ask the people to relay a message to him that they are outside.

And the message is passed through the house and finally gets to Jesus, and we don't know if he knew why they were there or not, but his response is to ask a **rhetorical question** in verse 33:

Who are my mother and my brothers?

And he looks at those sitting at his feet listening to him, perhaps his disciples, certainly those who desire to hear him and follow him, and he redefines his own family in verse 34:

[34] And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! [35] For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

It shouldn't be lost on us that Jesus' mother and brothers are outside the house while his true disciples/family are inside. This is intentional imagery by Mark.

His mother and brother arrive, coming to **seize him**, to **control him**, to **tame him**, and to **reign him in a little** and Jesus says that the ones who are truly his family are actually those who **sit as his feet** and walk in obedience to Him.

In other words, to be Jesus' family you must be his disciples, **taking a posture of subordination to him**.

And it's not just subordination, but **joyful** subordination. If this crowd were like the other crowds, they had traveled from all over to be near him. They were likely tired and they couldn't eat in the house so there were likely hungry. And yet, they sit at his feet, eager to hear from him. This type of eagerness and self-sacrifice smacks of a **joy-filled disposition**. Joy at being **fortunate enough** to be in the house with him and be willing to sit at his feet and hear all that he says.

This is a posture of joyful subordination to him. You see, what his family and the Scribes did was take a posture of **critical insubordination**, of trying to **wrestle control** out of

Jesus' hands, of usurping his **rightful authority**, of **picking** and **choosing when to listen** and **what to hear**.

And church, we must be careful that we aren't like this.

Here's the **sobering reality of this for us**, remember the shared wording and phrasing of verses 21 and 30 I mentioned earlier? Mark's point is that trying to **control Jesus**, and **tame him, attempting to seize him and limit his ministry**, functionally **picking** and **choosing** what you want to **hear** and **obey**, is actually no different than calling him Satan. Both demonstrate a lack of **discipleship** and a lack of being a **part of his family**.

A genuine disciple is one who takes a posture of **joyful subordination** to Him in everything he says and does. It's **all of him or none of him**.

And you and I should tremble at this because if you're like me I'm tempted to ignore certain things **Jesus says** or **modify** them because they are **hard to hear**. And you and I must not do that. To be a genuine disciple means **despite hardships like lack of sleep or hunger**, we come, sitting at his feet as joyful listeners and seek to walk in joyful obedience to him – (ie, **take a posture of joyful subordination to Him**).

This is what a genuine disciple looks like and how we posture ourselves to him. And I want to close with three ways that we can increasingly posture ourselves like this:

1. WE MUST SEE THAT THIS POSTURE IS ONLY POSSIBLE THROUGH THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION

Listen, Jesus is never in the house to say these things if he didn't first leave his eternal dwelling to wrap himself in human skin and bones and become a man. And he becomes a man in order to march his way to Jerusalem and the cross for you and me. We are able to relate to him this way because he died on the cross for our sins. He took our punishment and nailed our sins to the cross to make our dead souls come to life in Him.

And his death wasn't the end, on the third day he rose again conquering sin and death once for all.

And this action of selflessness is what makes verse 28 true:

"Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter..."

Are you a Christian this morning? Are you seeking to grow in how you posture yourself in **joyful subordination** to Jesus as his disciple? Then you must first look to his work on the cross in out of the tomb in thanksgiving because without that we aren't disciples at all, rather we are destined to spend eternity separated from Him

in Hell. But if you're a disciple of Jesus, look to the cross and empty tomb and marvel and rejoice for your sins are forgiven.

And if you aren't a Christian, let me say that today could be the day when you find the freedom and joy of seeing Jesus as your Lord and Savior by trusting that he is strong enough to take your sin and wrongdoing and forgive it. Nothing is above his forgiveness.

2. WE MUST OFTEN SIT AT HIS FEET AND AIM TO DO HIS WILL

It's not always easy to sit at his feet and do his will. Sometimes it means being outside our comfort zones or being inconvenienced. The crowd in the house was **tired** and **hungry** and yet they came and sat and listened, eager to hear him with joy.

A longing to be at his feet and a desire to do his will is the mark of a disciple and these people were called his family.

Now, would this have been the case had those sitting at his feet not watched him interact with people, heal those with diseases, cast out demons, and listened to him talk?

I mean, it's one thing to simply hear about it but Jesus' family had only heard of it by word of mouth and thought he was insane.

It's another to often find ourselves watching, looking in, hearing what he says, seeing him at work. Church, you and I individually must encounter Jesus in the Scriptures, through prayers, and through our own personal experiences with trusting him that all we have left is to metaphorically crowd into a house and sit at his feet.

The more we seek to see him care for us and his people, understand the truths that he says, and watch him answer prayer, the more eager we will be to posture ourselves in joyful subordination to him.

3. WE MUST TRUST THAT HE IS PATIENTLY HELPING US TO GROW IN THIS

How patient is Jesus with us? Jesus' mother and brothers were calling him a crazy man, one who had lost it. They didn't see him for who he was. This includes Mary by the way, the one who had encountered an angel, gone to Bethlehem, was visited by angels and wise men and had sung the magnificat "My soul magnifies the Lord, for he who is mighty has done great things for me!" And here she calls him crazy.

Certainly James was there. James, Jesus' half brother was there calling him crazy, just called not a part of his family.

I love looking at this because of the patience of Jesus.

Flip over with me to 1 Cor 15:1

[1] Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, [2] and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, [5] and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. [6] Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. [7] Then he appeared to James...

Then he appeared to James – five words with massive significance. I don't know if James was a believer in his brother at this time or if this was Jesus' coming to James to ensure that his half-brother understood who he was. But the fact that Jesus, after James had called him a crazy man and tried to seize him to control him, went to him to talk to him and show himself to him as an act of love is remarkable for you and me because this show his heart. A heart of patience and long-suffering with us who are idiots.

Church, we won't walk perfectly in subordination to Jesus as disciples. We should strive to, but we will fail. And when we fail, remember James and run to Jesus and his patient care for you.

A genuine disciple is one who takes a posture of subordination of Christ. Let us be like this.

Pray

BENEDICTION: