

Gospel of Mark Chapter 3B

Quote from C.S. Lewis speaking of the Lord Jesus said:

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell.” “You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

Our study in the Gospel of Mark has repeatedly provided evidence, as do the other Gospels that Jesus Christ is in fact the Son of God. Remember Mark began with a clear statement:

Mark 1:1 **The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**

• Later in Chapter 1 we heard God the Father who spoke from Heaven saying:

Mark 1: 11 **“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”**

• Even the demons that Jesus cast out confessed his deity.

Mark 1: 24 **“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.”**

- It would seem to me that the only reasonable conclusion anyone could come up with after following Jesus, listening to his teaching, watching him heal the sick, release the demon oppressed, raise the dead, command the elements of nature is: he must be God.
- BUT to this point in the Gospel of Mark we have not heard the confession of Christ as Lord from the mouth of ANY man. Why is that?

1Co 2:14 tells us that **The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.**

- Apart from the direct intervention of God, man is unable to understand the things of the Spirit.

PRAY that the Holy Spirit grants us understanding into the Word of God...

I began this morning with a quote from C.S. Lewis because I thought his quote actually provides an outline for the portion of Mark I plan to address this morning..

In the narrative that Andy read for us this morning Mark describes:

1. The crowd saw Jesus as a good teacher.
2. Jesus' own family members thought he was a lunatic.
3. And then there are the scribes who declared him to be a Liar empowered by the devil himself.
 - Is Jesus a Leader, A Lunatic, A Liar? Or is he Lord?

The context of this narrative tells us that we are at the height of Jesus' popularity.

- People were coming to Jesus from everywhere within Israel. As far north as Tyre and Sidon (modern day Lebanon) and as far south as Idumea (Edom) that would be south of the Dead Sea near the border with Egypt.

The crowds pressed upon the Lord to the point where he was concerned they might crush him:

Vs 9, **And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him,**

- In the chronology of Jesus' public ministry this is most likely where he took the crowd to the Mount of Beatitudes and gave what we know as "the Sermon on the Mount."

Matthew 5: 1 **Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.**

- And the response of the crowd is found in Matthew 7:

Matthew 7: 28 **And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, 29 for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.**

- To this crowd Jesus was an amazing teacher and yet he was only a man.

Even today the majority of people would freely admit that Jesus was a good teacher.

- He would be on the short list of the world's greatest teachers which might include: Confucius, Buddha, Mohamed
- Renown Atheist Richard Dawkins in an interview with Jonathan Harris stated that Jesus was a good moral teacher.

Some would even say that he was a Prophet.

- Muslims believe that Jesus Christ was a prophet and a good moral teacher.

If your belief concerning the Lord Jesus ENDS with him simply being a good moral teacher; you join the massive crowd of humanity who holds that same opinion yet remains under the wrath of God.

- If Jesus was a mere human teacher and NOT God incarnate he would be no different from you and me.
- If he was a mere man , born under the curse of sin, he would have possessed the same corrupt sinful nature as all of the sons of Adam.
- But he wasn't! Jesus was born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit. The uniqueness of his birth enabled him to be 100% man and 100% God. The sinless son of man, Immanuel the Son of God.

Point #2. Some of his family members thought that he was a Lunatic:

Mark 3: 20 **Then he went home**, (Capernaum - Peter's house) **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."**

- The words that Mark uses are very strong. Members of Jesus' own family went out to SEIZE him. Literally they intended to bind him and deprive him of his freedom. (straight jacket) Because they thought he was "Out of his mind."
- Why would Jesus' own family members think this?
 - HE had cleansed the temple. Calling it "His Father's House."
 - BUT they grew up with him! As far as they knew he had the same father.
 - When he preached in Nazareth the crowd actually tried to kill him.
 - Maybe they need to bring him to his senses, for his own good.

The Gospel of John tells us at this point that his brothers, the biological children of Mary and Joseph, did not believe in him.

John 7: 2 **Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand.** 3 **So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing.** 4 **For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world."** 5 **For not even his brothers believed in him.**

- To the unbelieving mind the Gospel of Christ is foolishness (1 Corinthians 1)
- In John 10:20 the Jews were divided many of them thought Jesus was "Mad."
- The Apostle Paul's passionate proclamation of the Gospel before Festus in Acts 26 caused Festus to say: "*Paul, you are out of your mind, your great learning is driving you insane.*"

I remember working to prepare a couple for marriage. At that point this particular couple did not believe on the Lord Jesus.

- So I took the opportunity to share the Gospel with them.
- As I described how the Son of God, the very one who created all things was so moved by the sinful condition of man that he decided to put on human flesh, come down to dwell with man as a part of his own creation.
- I went on to describe how he lived a perfect and sinless life and then offered himself as the only sacrifice that fully satisfied the justice of his Holy Father;

- By believing on the Lord Jesus, trusting in his sacrifice as the only payment for our sins, we enter into eternal fellowship with our loving God.
 - The whole time I spoke there was a strange grin on the face of this young man and when I finished I said, “You think this is a fairy tale, don’t you.” He answered “absolutely.”

1 Corinthians 1: 18 **For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

- To the crowd, Jesus was a good teacher. To his family he was a lunatic.
- NOW we move on to the scribes who believed that Jesus was a liar, a deceiver in league with and empowered by Satan.

Mark 3: 2 **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.”**

- The scribes came down from Jerusalem bringing a message from headquarters. The leadership of Israel had come to the conclusion regarding the miracles of Jesus. They determined that “He was possessed by Beelzebul.”
- Historically Baal was the chief god of the Canaanites. The name denoted “Lord.”
- Baal-zebub - “Lord of the Flies - the chief God of the Philistines
- The Jews changed the term Zebub to Zebul in an effort to defile the name: Beelzebul means: “Lord of the dung-heap”
- The Scribes and Pharisees, leaders of God’s chosen people determined that the Holy, Spotless Lamb of God was empowered by the Lord of the dung-heap.

In essence they are saying that Jesus derived the power to do supernatural acts from Satan and not from God.

- How incredibly dark is their blindness? How distorted their deception?
- NOW we look at Jesus’ response:
 - His response is PERFECTLY LOGICAL His response is PROPHETICALLY CLEAR His response is POWERFULLY SEVERE

Mark 3:23 **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.**

• It simply makes no sense that Satan would cast out Satan. If the work of Jesus is diametrically opposed to Satan, how could he possibly be empowered by Satan?

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.**

- From the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden the world was under the cruel dictatorship of Satan. He is the strong man seeking to guard his goods.
- BUT Jesus has come to bind the strong man and plunder his house.

- The evidence of Christ's superior power, the proof of his plunder is seen in the power with which He releases people from demonic oppression.

PROPHETICALLY CLEAR: The Prophet Isaiah foretold the great day when the "*Prey would be taken from the Mighty.*"

Isaiah 49: 24 *Can the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued? 25 For thus says the LORD: "Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children.*

- The Servant of the Lord, the Son of God had come to set the captives free.
- To those who made this horrible accusation Jesus speaks an equally horrifying warning:

HIS RESPONSE IS POWERFULLY SEVERE

Mark 3: 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 had said, "He has an unclean spirit."*

- By saying "Truly" Jesus is drawing attention to the TRUTH of what he is about to say. You might think of it as "Now Here This!"

The First part of Jesus' statement should bring you great comfort. (IT DOES ME)
"Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter,"

- God is a forgiving God! Even those blasphemies that were spoken when we foolishly used name of the Lord in vain. God will forgive.

Psalm 103: 2 *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, 3 who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,*

Psalm 103: 12 *as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*

In Luke 7 to the sinful woman who interrupted the Pharisees' dinner party to wash Jesus feet with her tears wiping them with her hair Jesus said: *"Your sins are forgiven."*

While we do not know the vast limits of God's abundant forgiveness, this severe warning given by Jesus to the Scribes tells us that they were perilously close to the edge.

Mark 3: 29 *but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"—*

- Blasphemy - is a verbal sin (*Speaking Against God*) The Scribes were not only blaspheming the Son of God they were speaking against the power behind his miracles, the Holy Spirit.

Fears concerning the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit have plagued many sincere Believers who honestly want to stay as far away from it as possible.

- Maybe YOUR own struggles with persistent sin have caused you to think that you have committed the blasphemy of the Spirit.
- Some have wrongly taught that the blasphemy of the Spirit as the commission of a “Mortal Sin” like murder or adultery. (Where would that leave King David?)
- Fundamentalist Pastors have been accused of the Blasphemy of the Spirit by Pentecostals because they teach that tongues, miracles and healings are not for today.
- Let’s try to understand the Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit by reviewing who it is that Jesus is speaking to and the circumstances of his warning.

FIRST: Jesus is speaking to the Scribes.

The Scribes were the Stewards of God’s Holy Word, they were intimately acquainted with the Law of God the writings of the Prophets. They were the teachers of God’s chosen people.

When the Wise men visited Herod and he wanted to know where the Messiah was to be born he went to the Scribes, the Chief Priests. Their answer is found in Matt 2:5 **In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,** They quoted Micah 5:2

- Of all the people on the face of the earth the Scribes and the Pharisees should have recognized the Messiah of Israel!
- He was Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) to a virgin woman, (Isaiah 7:14) of the tribe of Judah, As Messiah He was filled with the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 61)

Isa 61:1 **The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;**

- Although they KNEW the Word of the Lord and witnessed ALL of these things THEY WERE GUILTY of rejecting the promised Savior,
- The sin of the Scribes was a sin against the LIGHT! Rejecting the clear testimony of God’s unchanging Word.

John 1: 11 **He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.**

- They had the unique privilege of hearing the Gospel from the lips of the Messiah himself.
- They were first-hand witnesses of the glory of God that was manifest in Jesus.
 - When Jesus cleansed the lepers it was the leadership of Israel who evaluated and affirmed the cleansing.
 - They saw the lame walk, they interviewed the blind man who was now seeing, they saw Lazarus raised from the dead.

With each manifestation of God's abundant grace the hearts of the Scribes became harder and harder until at the height of their rebellion they make the declaration that Jesus was empowered by Satan.

Rejecting Jesus out of ignorance is one thing, (*we have all done that*) but attributing the power behind his miraculous works to Satan is much more serious.

- If one is weak, he can be encouraged.
- If one is ignorant, he can be informed.
- BUT if one is willfully blind, decidedly deaf after God has graciously revealed himself with clarity and conviction, WHAT IS LEFT? He has cut himself off from the very one who leads us to repentance.

While we know that God is long-suffering. We know that He is not willing that any should perish but that all come to repentance.

- There is a time, when his patience comes to an end and his righteous judgment begins.
- Consider Pharaoh, although he saw many miracles, his heart was hardened and he was led to his own destruction.

But that is not who WE are! God has **removed our heart of stone and given us a heart of flesh.**

- He has opened our eyes to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
(2 Cor. 4:6)
- He has baptized us by the Spirit into vital union with Christ as members of his body.
(1 Cor. 12:13)
- He has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.
(2 Cor. 1:22)
- He has given us the Spirit of Adoption causing us to cry out Abba, Father.
(Romans 8:15)
- He has filled us with the Holy Spirit to be a living witness of Christ's redeeming grace.