

Sermon Title: What Do You Think of Jesus?
Scripture Text: Mark 3:20-27

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 5-20-18

Now, come with me—Mark Chapter 3 is still our venue, and we are continuing to look at that period of time in Jesus's life which is referred to by gospel commentators as the Great Galilean Ministry; "great" because the influence was *huge*, "great" because it was the longest segment of time that Jesus was mainly in one place—that being in Galilee—about a year and a half. And during that time, it is said that Jesus essentially banished disease and demons from Galilee. Now, today, Mark Chapter 3, Verses 20 through 27; and remember, as we've worked our way through this, that now Jesus has gone public with the appointment of the Twelve Apostles. He has *many* following Him; He's had the smaller group that are His disciples, and from among His disciples, He has now named those 12. Later that day, after He named the Twelve, He preached the Sermon on the Mount. The miracles have continued to flow; no one had ever seen anything like what was going on.

But not too long after that, we arrive at a turning point. Our passage for today brings us to Mark's account of a specific day when the leaders of the Jews—"the Pharisees and their scribes" (Lk. 5:30, NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise indicated)—took their rejection of Jesus to the fullest extent. This was the day when they didn't only gather in secret and talk about how they were going to try to trick Him and get Him to contradict Himself. They not only met in secret to figure out how they were going to get Him arrested and killed; now, they not only, in secret, talked about all the things they didn't like with Him—now they go *full blown public* with saying, "He is Satanic." It was a turning point in Jesus's ministry, and as we move along, I'll be showing you, as we develop in Mark, how He actually changed the emphasis of things after this day that we come to today.

Now, we're going to need two visits to deal with this whole section—it's Chapter 3, Verse 20 through Verse 33—but today, I want to describe the situation to you, and develop who was involved in this setting, and then next week, Lord willing, we will deal with a significant theological issue that is framed by the words of Jesus in response to what we're going to see today.

Now, understand—nothing has changed in this sense: Jesus is *spectacularly* popular when we come to this passage; people were seeking Him in untold, unprecedented numbers. We've been told about the time when, at Andrew and Peter's house, that the crowd wouldn't even let the guys that were bringing their paralyzed friend in the door, and they went up on the roof and dug a hole and lowered [their friend] down. We've been told of the period of time when Jesus had to actually postpone His plan to visit all the towns and synagogues around Galilee because, the one guy that He told not to say anything went out and stirred up a whole bunch of fervor for the wrong reasons, and Jesus couldn't even go near the towns for a while, so He stayed in the countryside. We've seen Him slip out of the town of Capernaum and go down to the shore of the Sea of Galilee, so that He could, at least, get in a boat a few feet off the shore and be able to talk to more people. It gets so intense that, by the time we get to our passage for this morning, Jesus and His men were having trouble even being able to eat a meal in peace and quiet.

Now, I want to show you something that will enhance what Mark says to us today. God gave us four records of the gospel—we always want to harmonize those things—and I want to point

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out to you something that Matthew included that happened immediately before what we're going to study today, so here's Matthew's setup for today: it's in Matthew Chapter 12, starting at Verse 22. He says, "Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw." Now, in this case, the *healing* isn't the focus of the passage; we've studied plenty of miracles of healing and deliverance from demonic activity, and Matthew gives you one of those non-specific time references when he says "Then," but we know that that took place after the Sermon on the Mount and right before what we're going to see this morning in Mark. What's significant is that this was a miracle that, in a matter of a few seconds, showed, yet again, that Jesus has power, both over the world of demons—that means He's superior to demons; that, in essence, means He's God—and He has power over physical disease, which basically means He has the power to create. You put those together, what you have here is another of an endless string of evidences is that Jesus is God in human flesh. Remember, Mark began his gospel saying, This is "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," so he's showing that He is the Son of God—God the Son in human flesh (see Jn. 1:1, 14, 18, 49; cf. Ps. 2:7-9, 12; Pr. 30:4; Mic. 5:2; Heb. 1:1-12).

Now, the reaction [of] the people, when they saw that miracle, was what you would expect by this time, only *they* actually took it to a new level. Matthew 12:23 said, "All the crowds"—that means there was *lots* of people; I mean, "a crowd" is a lot, and when you say *crowds*, plural, that must be *a lot* of a lot of people around. And Jesus did this in the open—obviously to make a point—and as we work our way through this, you know that He did it for everyone to see, but I think you'll also agree that, He did this *specifically* with the Pharisees and the scribes in mind, *knowing* they were there and knowing their hearts (see Matt. 9:4; Lk. 9:47, etc.). Now it says "the crowds were amazed"—we're going to see a different translation of the same Greek word later on today, but that's a word that means something like "to be put out of place"; they were driven over the edge, they didn't have words to express it—it was beyond what they could say, they were *totally* astounded, they were overwhelmed by what they [saw], and so...they started asking the question: "This man cannot be the Son of David, can He?" Now, it's not a statement of certainty; there's a way to ask a question in Greek that assumes that you're saying, "I'm assuming this is true." This one—it's a legitimate question, and they're starting to say, "Is this man the Messiah?"

"Son of David" is one of many Biblical titles for the Messiah, the One who would one day reign from the throne of David (see Is. 9:7; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Lk. 1:32; Jn. 7:42; Rev. 5:5; 22:16). Now, if you go back and *look* at Matthew's record of this miracle in its context, you'll see that he has just made the point that Jesus is acting exactly like the Messiah's supposed to act. Earlier in Matthew 12, he quotes from Isaiah Chapter 42, and he's saying the Jesus is demonstrating the power of the Holy Spirit in the miracles. We know that, leading up to this, Jesus has taught "as one having authority" (Matt. 7:29)—a big contrast to the scribes, who always quoted each other (cf. 2 Cor. 10:12)—we saw that comment at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. We've seen that He came gently and He reaches out to hurting souls, He invites people to come to Him and find rest for their souls, as opposed to the heavy burden of all the do's and don'ts of the legalism of the Pharisaical system (Matt. 11:28-29). We've seen Him shun the efforts to grab Him and make Him into a political leader of a revolt (Jn. 6:15)—

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instead, He's majoring on the needs of human hearts (Jn. 6:27). And so, the ones who were starting to ask the question—"Can this be the Son of David? Could this be the Messiah?"—they're the ones who were actually showing signs of beginning to understand.

Now, let's go over to Mark, and we're going to see how Mark picks up from that point—this miracle has already been done, this question is now being murmured among the crowds of the crowds of people. And you're going to see that, Jesus's life and ministry and words demand a reaction, and you're going to see four reactions to what's going on here. In Verse 20, Number 1: the crowds are going to say, "Amazing!" In Verse 21, His family is going to say, "He's lost His senses." In Verse 22, the scribes are going to come and say, "He's Satanic." And then you're going to get Jesus's own words, where He explains that He is the victor over Satan (vss. 23-27).

So, let's start with the reaction of the crowds—it's pretty straightforward. Keep in mind: just before this was the healing of a demon-possessed blind and mute man; now he is normal, he's in his right mind, the man who was mute five minutes ago is talking now, the blind man is now seeing. Verse 20: It says, "And He came home"—the "He" being Jesus—"and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal." "Came home" is, literally, "He came into a house." Most likely, that was the house of Peter and Andrew and their families—the large house in Capernaum—we talked about that before, you can go back and hear about that if you want to; very interesting place that, still, the ruins are very identifiable, even today.

Well, as soon as He got back there, the place instantly became so crowded, there's no hope of privacy—couldn't even eat a meal; and since it wasn't time to go feed four or five thousand people, plus women and children—men plus women and children—with miraculous food, well, Jesus has to deal with this situation. But this illustrates: the most common reaction to Jesus is that, He was truly amazing; they were just so astounded, they were just irresistibly drawn to come to Him. Now, it was normal in Israel—rabbis would act as mentors; a rabbi would have his disciples, his students, who would follow him around, and he would teach them. But, no one had ever seen a man who didn't just have His three or four or five or ten students, but one that the "crowds of the crowds" kept thronging to Him.

The reactions to Jesus—first of all, the crowds: "Amazing!" Then, His family, in Verse 21. News of the situation in and around Capernaum traveled fast. Now, you might need to think a little bit about the geography, possibly even check out a map. The region of Galilee is the northern region of Israel; to the south of that, you have Samaria; the eastern edge of that is the Jordan River; and to the east of that is the Trans-Jordan, or Perea; and then, to the south of Samaria is Judea. This is the north part, and on the east side of the north part, you have the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum is up on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee, and it's about 30 miles from Capernaum—the headquarters where Jesus spent most of His time during that year and a half—it's about 30 miles from there, up a winding road into the hill country, to the town of Nazareth, where Joseph and Mary were from, where Jesus had grown up.

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Now, His mother came, along with Jesus's brothers—or, technically, His half-brothers; they made that about 30-mile journey from Nazareth to Capernaum. Verse 21 in Mark 3: "When His own people heard of this"—"His own people" is an idiomatic phrase for His family, His closest family, meaning His immediate family, closest relatives. If there's any doubt, next week when we get down to Verse 31, you'll see that it specifies it was "His mother and His brothers" who arrived, who wanted to talk to Him. But look what it says: "When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, 'He has lost His senses.' " Now, the word "take custody" shows up about 15 times in Mark; eight times, it refers to Jesus being seized, or someone *trying* to seize Him, including His arrest; it's also used of the arrest of John the Baptist (Mk. 1:14). Jesus's brothers came with the intention to grab Him and get Him away—get Him out of that situation. They probably feared that He was in danger, and out of the sense of loyalty, they wanted to protect Him. That makes a lot of sense.

Now, understand, though: it says, "When His own people *heard* of this." "Heard of this"? Well, why hadn't they *seen* it? Well, they'd lived with Jesus for 30 years, and how many miracles did He do during those 30 years? None. You can read books about miracles that Jesus did when He was a little boy, and they're bunk! His first miracle is recorded in John Chapter 2: it was at a wedding in the little town of Cana, not far from Nazareth—that's when He turned the water into wine. He had been back to Nazareth once, and when He came there, He rebuked all of His former neighbors for their unbelief (Lk. 4:23-24). And it says He didn't do miracles—or at least, "not many miracles there because of their unbelief" (Matt. 13:58).

So, *they* hadn't been seeing all the stuff that's going on, but they *heard* about it. They had grown up with this guy; they had observed Him every day—He was their older half-brother, and they'd grown up with an older brother who was perfect. That could make for some strain. Everything He did was perfect (1 Pet. 2:22), so that validated His identity, but it *must* have frustrated the younger brothers and sisters who could never match up to that impeccable standard—I mean, surely Joseph and Mary blew it sometime, and Jesus was right, every time that something like that would happen. So, you can imagine some resentment and some alienation—they must have thought of Him as very odd, indeed.

Well, Jesus didn't perform any miracles until His public ministry started. And there's that one glimmer when He was 12 years old—remember: His parents took Him with them to Passover down in Jerusalem, and then the caravan left and they're on their way home, and they discover Jesus isn't with the caravan; they turn around, they go back, and they find Him in the temple; and He was astounding the scholars, and talked about being about His Father's [business] (Lk. 2:41-51), but, still, we don't even know if His brothers and sisters saw that, we don't know if they were with Him or with them when they were there, but we *do* know that they did not believe Him to be the Messiah, yet (Jn. 7:5).

Now, we know who these people were; the names of Jesus's half-brothers are listed, and we're going to see them in Mark Chapter 6, Verse 3: There was James, there was Josés, there was Judas—also called "Jude" later in the New Testament—and Simon. That verse also indicates that He had sisters, so it names four brothers and says "and sisters," so there has to be at least two sisters—that means that there had to be at least six natural children of Joseph

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and Mary who grew up in the family, younger than Jesus, of course; so at least seven children born to Mary. That doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity is fabricated by people who refute and reject what the New Testament very clearly says, so don't buy that stuff.

Now, when Jesus, after 30 years, left His family, He embarked on His public ministry—I'm sure that the brothers and sisters wondered about what He was doing. We don't know what He might have said to them; we do know, when He came back to Nazareth, it didn't go well—Luke Chapter 4—they tried to kill Him...not the brothers and sisters, but the people in the city. And the brothers and sisters must've been shocked at that, and now, the reputation is getting bigger and bigger, and the news comes back to Nazareth, and they're very concerned. They heard about these oppressive crowds, so they figured, "We've got to go get Him out of there—we've got to rescue Him!" Their motivation was clear: "for they were saying, 'He has lost His senses' " (Mk. 3:21)—there's that word: *existemi*, which is translated "amazed:" over in Matthew 12, but used in a context like this, it means to lose one's mind, or to be beside one's self, or to be—well, insane. Members of Jesus's family were convinced that He was no longer in control of His rational senses.

Now, of course, His mother Mary—it isn't said that *she* said that, specifically; I think she knew a whole lot more; aside from the angelic revelations, she had been with Jesus in Cana, when He turned water into wine. Clearly, she couldn't bring herself to stay back when the four boys went to get Jesus, so she came along, but she didn't intervene. Apparently, she suffered in silence as Jesus was misunderstood and rejected and mistreated and, ultimately, crucified. Remember that, when they took Jesus to the temple when He was circumcised, that Simeon had prophesied about that in Luke Chapter 2, and he said to Mary, "And a sword will pierce even your own soul" (vs. 35)—I bet that was one of the days that she felt the prick of that sword in her soul.

Now, the good news is that, even though these brothers did not believe in Him yet, that was going to change. They would come to embrace Him in faith after the resurrection (see Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:19); two of them would actually be used to write New Testament books, eventually (Jas. 1:1; Jude 1:1), but on this day, out of concern for Him and a sense of pity and family duty, and in their spiritual blindness, like everybody else there, they thought they were going to rescue Jesus. Now, they weren't saying He was Satanic, but, they thought He was crazy.

So, the crowds are saying, "He's amazing." His family is saying, "He's lost His senses." Then comes the scribes in Verse 22. Now, remember: Matthew has told us that, immediately preceding this was that healing of a blind, mute, demon-possessed man, so He's *just* cast the demon out of someone. And people are starting to wonder out loud, "Is this the Son of David? Is this the Messiah? So, here they come--Verse 22, Mark 3: "The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying"—now, let me stop there a minute. That little phrase "who came down from Jerusalem" is significant; there were scribes and there were Pharisees in Galilee, and they had been dogging Jesus all along—they'd been trying to trick Him, they'd been questioning Him, they'd argued with Him, they had spread lies about Him already, but *these* guys "came down from Jerusalem." Now, it's "up" on the map, but it's "down" in elevation, so

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they "came *down* from Jerusalem." What happened is, the *local* scribes and Pharisees called for the spiritual SWAT team to come in and give them backup. These were the heavy hitters, these were the ones that were "from Jerusalem." Now, Mark calls them "scribes," Matthew calls them "Pharisees" (Matt. 12:24)—which was it? It was both; they were scribes who were part of the party of the Pharisees, who happened to be the ones who spoke this day. The scribes were sort of the scholarly ones; the Pharisees were the spokespeople and the rabbis (see Mk. 2:16; Lk. 5:30).

And so, this combination of a powerful miracle—delivering this demon-possessed man, and not to mention the hundreds that they'd already witnessed before that—plus, the talk about, "Well, maybe this is the Messiah"—it made the Pharisaical SWAT team panic, and they resorted to a pathetic accusation against Jesus: "The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul,' and 'He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.'" (Mk. 3:22). Now, they were in a mess; they really didn't have anything intelligent that they could say—they would have done a lot better on this day if they had just shut up. But, they opened their mouth. You see, they couldn't use the Scriptures to make their point, because the Scriptures all pointed to, "Jesus is the Son of David," just like Matthew was explaining in Matthew Chapter 12; they couldn't attack the miracle, because more than likely, the guy who, a little while ago, was demon-possessed—that guy who, a little while ago, couldn't speak, and that guy who, a little while ago, couldn't see—was present to look the Pharisees in the eyes and talk to them, so they couldn't refute the miracle (see Acts 4:16).

They've got a problem. There was probably dozens of other people there, who had been healed or delivered from demonic oppression, who could also give testimony. So they came up with their—today, we would call them "the Talking Points," their catchy little sayings to capture their anti-Jesus sentiments, and it was patently absurd. "He is possessed by Beelzebul." Now, you might not even want to try to pronounce "Beelzebul" for fear you would say something worse; you probably don't use that term very often. It originally referred to "Baal" [Bah-ALL]—or, people often say "BAY-uhl"—"Baal-zebul," meaning "Baal the Prince." That was the name of the chief deity of the Philistine city of Ekron back in the Old Testament. You can read about it in 2 Kings, Chapter 1, Verse 2. Well, that was the name of their god, and the Israelites mocked the false religion of the Philistines by referring to this god, instead of "Baal-zebul," they called him "Baal-zebub"—just change the "L" to a "B" on the end of the word, and that means "Lord of the Dung," or, "Lord of the Flies" that hover around the dung; it's used both ways. By the first century, "Beelzebul" and "Beelzebub"—both words—had become a name for Satan, who is "the ruler of the demons." And that's what the Pharisees intended when they associated that name with Jesus—they're saying, "He is Satanic! Yes, He casts out demons—because He's their *leader!*"

You see, here's the pickle that they were in: Jesus's power was clearly supernatural—He could do things that nobody else could do (Jn. 15:24)—so, it could only come from one of two sources; it was either from God and it was true, or it was from Satan and it was deception (see Deut. 13:1-3). So, when Jesus claimed to be from God, the leaders—the spiritual leaders of the Jews—in essence, called Him a liar. "No, no, no, no, no...Okay, He has some power, but it's because it's the power of the prince of darkness. These are the spiritual leaders of the

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Jews—the ones who *should* have been the most astute students of the Scriptures, who should have been leading throngs of people to *believe* in Jesus and to repent of their sins (see Deut. 18:15, 18-19; cf. Jn. 5:39)—and they come to the conclusion that He's either Satan himself, or He's at least an emissary of Satan or He's under the control of Satan. That's the wrong conclusion to come to.

Well, look at the reactions—the crowds: "Amazing!" His family: "Got to get Him out of there—He's lost His senses." The scribes: "He's Satanic." Ah, but now, Jesus is going to seize the moment; He's going to take charge of the situation, and today, we're just going to finish up with what He said, and then I'll remind you next week that that sets us up for something that needs a little bit of our time to look at, and I think will be very helpful for you. Verse 23 of Mark 3: "And He called them to Himself"—now, let that sink in, try to picture that. The antecedent of "them" is the Pharisees and the scribes. Now, there's crowds of crowds of people, but Jesus not only is getting a hint of what's being said—and Matthew, this time, clarifies what Mark has clarified before: He knew their thoughts, anyway (Matt. 12:25)—and so, with all these crowds of people, over the din of the crowd, He calls the scribes and the Pharisees: "Hey, guys, guys—come closer! Yeah—you and you and you and you and you and you, and the people you brought—you guys come up here to the front row."

But He doesn't whisper to them—"He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables." Now, we're going to see some parables—we'll study some parables in Mark Chapter 4 in the coming weeks. The idea of "parable"—it literally means, "to cast alongside"—it's where you use something that people know and understand, like if they're good at growing wheat, you might use planting-seeding-growing wheat, or planting a wheat field, and then having to deal with weeds in it (e.g. Matt. 13:24-30); you use something people understand and you lay alongside something that you're trying to show them, and by comparison between what they understand what you're trying to teach them, they learn by comparison. That's what he's saying—He's going to speak to them in parables, or, maybe in this case, we might even say "analogies."

So He calls these guys to Himself, and even though He wants to make sure He's looking *them* in the eye—*they're* hearing at first and foremost—everybody is hearing this. "He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables"—He starts out by saying, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Now that's a pretty obvious question. "Do any of you know how to throw yourself out of this room?" I mean, it's *absurd*; if He's casting out demons by the power of Satan, then Satan is opposing Satan! And then He elaborates—look at the next three verses: "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished!" (vss. 24-26).

I don't think that needs a lot more explanation, but He gives you one more illustration, one more analogy, one more little parable, if you care to call it that; Mark 3:27—"But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house." You can't break into anyone's house and take their stuff unless you can overpower the owner and the occupant of the house! So, Jesus's point is that,

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not only is *He* not empowered by Satan, He is infinitely *more powerful* than Satan! He's undoing what Satan has been doing behind the scenes (1 Jn. 3:8; cf. Heb. 2:14-15)—or, in other words, once again: Jesus is claiming to be God. The demons are subject to Him (Mk. 1:27), and Matthew inserts—before that part about the kingdom divided—that He was "knowing their thoughts" (Matt. 12:25), so, one more evidence of His deity: He's omniscient, He knows what's going on in their minds, and He makes the proclamation. So, Jesus speaks up; He turns the discussion inside-out against the Pharisees. It's obvious to everyone: He has power over the demons (Matt. 8:16, 28-32); *plus*, there are all of the hundreds of other miracles that have been going on day after day; *plus*, He knows what they're thinking before they said anything.

So, look at this text: the people thought Jesus was absolutely amazing, they couldn't stay away; His family thought He was a lunatic; the Pharisees said He was a deceiver; the facts, as Jesus presented them, showed that Jesus is God. The life, the words, the ministry of Jesus Christ demands a response. Now, He didn't invent the terminology, but C.S. Lewis is credited for having made popular that famous set of three possibilities concerning Jesus—classic outline, people have used it many times—and I think it's a very good possibility C.S. Lewis might have gotten that idea from this passage. He said He must be a liar—that's what the Pharisees were saying; or a lunatic—that's what His half-brothers were saying; or, He's the Lord. You read in Lewis's testimony of coming to faith in Jesus Christ, which happened back in 1929, that it was after he had had many interactions with Christian friends—by the way, if you have a non-Christian friend and you keep talking to them and talking to them and talking to them, *keep talking*...you might have the next C.S. Lewis on your block—and it was after many conversations; he tells his testimony of coming to faith in Jesus Christ, and he says he was drawn to God *in spite of* his own attempts to resist (see Acts 26:14).

Let me read to you from his biography; he says this: "You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen"—I don't think that has anything to do with *Mary Magdalene*, it's the hall in which his office was in Oxford, or wherever it was he worked—"You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the"—and now, listen to this description of God—"the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so *earnestly* desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the third term of 1929, I gave in and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed; perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England." Isn't that an interesting way to describe yourself? "I just got saved—*reluctantly!*" I mean, imagine how much he had to admit he'd been wrong about—and he'd put it in print! That's what he was dejected about.

But then, he goes on to explain, in response to anyone who might suggest that you can have reverence for Jesus, you can have good feelings about Jesus, but not necessarily get radical about it—Lewis explained why that opinion is not logically tenable. Back to his words that he wrote: "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him—'I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That's 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

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the level with the man who says he is a poached egg, or 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 being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us; He did not intend to. Now, it seems to me obvious that He was *neither* a lunatic nor a fiend, and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God." Isn't that cool?

But, do you realize—that's where you have to go. When you investigate Jesus, you'll find out He's real; you'll find out He did all those things that are recorded, and all those things recorded of Him are recorded accurately; and so, you've got to say—He either is a liar, a deceiver of the *first* order; or He's nuts; or He's the Lord. And if He's the Lord, then He's the One that you must answer to (Acts 17:30-31; cf. Ps. 2:12; Matt. 7:22-23; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21). What *do* you think of Jesus (Matt. 16:13-17)? That's why this text is here, and the rest of Mark and Matthew and Luke and John and the other books of the Bible.

Heavenly Father, thank You for putting this before us. Thank You for calling it to our attention today. May You be exalted by our responses to our crucified and risen Savior. Thank You for making it so that, not only can we have our sins forgiven, but we can be Your instruments to speak Your truth in love and to spread the gospel wherever You may take us. Like we prayed for Maddie earlier in the service—what a wonderful opportunity to go and to help to do that in a faraway place, but Father, there will be dozens and dozens of opportunities this week where we can speak Your truth, in love, to people who need the Savior. So, make it so, we pray, that we would be faithful to Your plan, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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