

Mark 3:22-30
Blasphemy

Today's passage raises a serious question: Is Jesus a Crazy Relative or a Tool of the Devil?
We'll take the second part today.

What we saw last time and again this week is the reality of how different groups of people were trying to come to grips with who Jesus was. We saw his family in the passage 2 weeks ago, and today we see the response of the scribes/ teacher of the law.

Mark

3:20 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."

On June 16, 1858, a speech was delivered to a state party convention in Illinois. It became known as the "A house divided against itself cannot stand" speech. It was delivered by Abraham Lincoln. Students of the bible will recognize the phrase as coming from Jesus. Students in general might know that Lincoln used it in a speech at some point.

Many considered Lincoln's remarks as too radical for the occasion. Lincoln responded by saying, " I want to use some universally known figure, expressed in simple language as universally known, that it may strike home to the minds of men in order to rouse them to the peril of the times."

In 1858 the concept was well known to his audience as a statement by Jesus recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Jesus told the parable because he was making a universally relevant statement that his audience could understand.

Note the two options presented in this passage: **Jesus IS EITHER**
"Out of his mind" OR
"He is possessed by Beelzebul"

Jesus has been demonstrating a third option, i.e. He is the Son of Man, the Son of God.

The option of simply being a good moral teacher is NEVER presented in scripture.

As C.S. Lewis summarized it so well, Jesus is a Lunatic, Liar, or Lord.

WHERE DO YOU STAND TODAY?

People today even back off from the moral teacher option because when they actually look at his moral teaching on marriage, worship, and money, they see that Jesus doesn't simply line up with the "if it feels good do it" mindset. They may try to remake or reimagine Jesus into their own image, but when they

honestly look at Jesus of the Bible, they find that he is not aligned with their moral outlook.

A fourth option for some is that he was simply a Legend. The man, the myth, the legend. Jesus, if he lived, was a social hippie type who was down for the struggle against “the man” but his followers turned him into some spiritual legendary guru. They may say that Jesus simply came as a life coach to stir up a sense of self-fulfillment, but over the centuries followers came up with the disagreeable doctrines that make him a religious leader.

That view may be offered by those who want to appear to be unoffensive, but it is a view rooted in personal and chronological arrogance. “Today, we know better. We have a better understanding than those unsophisticated religious fanatics.”

REVIEW AND lead into the passage...

Jesus has become very popular and appointed 12 apostles to lay the foundation of the church age. The scribes now oppose him even while knowing who he is. They attribute his work to Satan. This was blasphemy.

We hear unforgiveable sin, and we ask, “What is it? Have I done it?”

Pastoral advice....If you are concerned about it, then probably haven't done it.

The heavy hitters FROM JERUSALEM come to check on Christ. These expert “scribes” would have more influence than the local scribes.

They are not in doubt about his miracles. They see them. Rather than say, “He must be from God”, they say, “He is a demon.”

That is the essence of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

APPLY *** The tendency to demonize others is a common trait of humanity. The crowd in Mark 3 saw it from the experts, and we see it from various experts today in different ways. The July 13 attempted assassination attempt caused people to say, “We need to tone down the rhetoric.”

Sadly, no one in the public realm wanted to actually admit his or her own guilt.

If we want to justify ourselves, we can't say, “The people who disagree with me actually have a point.”

That's no fun, and it doesn't put me in the place of moral, social, or political superiority.

This can get really ugly in church fights where people feel that there must be the side of the angels and the side of the devils.

EX Divisions can't simply be over PREFERENCES related to the style of worship or leadership or length of sermons or the color of the carpet or SS, etc. NO, the issues have to be over heresy or some scandal, even if imagined. The arguments become issues of spiritual or moral purity.

The scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, ‘He has Beelzebub,’ and, ‘By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.’” This was the most vicious charge leveled against Jesus up to this point—and perhaps in His whole life. It was an accusation that He was with Beelzebub.

Who is Beelzebub? In antiquity, Beelzebub was seen as a demigod, a lesser deity who ruled over filth, carrion, and flies. He was called the “Lord of the Dunghill.” You might know a popular literary piece of American literature titled Lord of the Flies, which is a takeoff on this title Beelzebub.

This accusation didn't end after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Such teaching continued with the Talmud where Jesus was described as a sorcerer with demonic power and authority. This was a backhand admission that Jesus did have unprecedented power in the world.

This lies at the heart of the Unforgiveable Sin. Attributing power of HS to power of Satan.

The Pharisees weren't doubting the works of Jesus, but they were saying that he was in league with Satan, i.e. His works were those of Satan.

Jesus shows that their argument is absurd. V. 23 ff

"Just listen to yourselves."

It would be kingdom suicide for Satan to cast out Satan.

NOTE: THERE is no attempt to explain who Beelzebub is to the audience. There is no downplaying the idea of Satan casting out Satan. Jesus doesn't say, "I'm speaking metaphorically here".

He and his audience were in tune with those concepts and language.

No one says, "He must be out of his mind. Listen to him talk this way about Satan." That was NOT over the top language to his audience, although it may seem odd to us.

While talk of Satan and demons may seem strange, in some ways it may be easier to believe than the talk of heaven.

EX: One whose life is filled with pain and misery might easily say, "I don't know if I believe in God and heaven, but I certainly believe in hell." That actually becomes an apologetic for the existence of God.
ex: MARTIN C speaking to Joe M.

If we take an honest look at the stuff that happens in this world, then we would conclude that evil is real, or we must get rid of the idea of evil all together. If we admit the reality of evil, then we are most likely wishing for some sort of justice, and where would that come from? NOT us.

We need a true justice that can only come from a truly just and righteous being...God.

To manifest his righteousness, God did not send an airtight argument. He sent an airtight person, His Son, Jesus. And the learned scribes are saying that he is in league with demons. Now, that is evil.

Jesus is demonstrating a clear logical argument. It is the scribes who are confused. Jesus is not rebuking them per se, He is giving them a chance to repent of their claim that He has a demon.

v. 27 What has happened is that the power of Satan's kingdom has been bound, and Christ is the one who has done it. He is rescuing people from the kingdom of Satan.

Jesus is saying the quiet part out loud - He has come to launch a direct assault on the kingdom of Satan. We need to read and hear this passage from the perspective of NT people. They were more aware of demonic activity than we have been in our day, at least until the last few years.

The talk about a kingdom of Satan, binding the strongman, and Beelzebub is odd to us, but it wasn't to them.

This passage points to Isa 49:24

Can you be rescued from a tyrant? Yes, when God brings deliverance.

24 "Can the prey be taken from the mighty man,
Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?"

25 Surely, thus says the Lord,

"Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away,
And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued;

For I will contend with the one who contends with you,
And I will save your sons.

26 I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh,
And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine;
And all flesh will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior

And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

The coming of Christ represents the power of God on the loose to rescue captives from the tyrant, Satan. His death and resurrection made the final outcome a foregone conclusion.

Jesus fulfills this OT promise. He plunders the enemy and rescues people. He teaches about the kingdom, and he shows the kingdom – word and deed.

The fulfillment of the promise was upon them, and the scribes knew it, saw it, and denied it. Their problem wasn't lack of data, but a moral problem – refusal to submit to authority of Jesus. This was blasphemy and it was the unforgiveable sin.

v. 28 Jesus asserts his authority - “I say to you”, not “it is written” He assumes authority unlike any previous rabbi.

Give heed to the Unforgiveable sin, it is real, but not for the true Christian. Jesus describes an eternally serious sin for which there is no forgiveness

But keep in mind the message of Christ who is over Satan. Jesus has bound the strong man. Jesus is Lord over all.

If someone is concerned, then probably not guilty. Not so with Pharisees who show no concern for their action.

If this talk about Satan and blasphemy is surprising language, I get it. We don't like to dwell on this kind of thing. At the same time we should admit that there is an evil presence in the world that can't be explained by mere human self-interest.

That said, **don't lose sight of how Christ has bound the strong man. REJOICE in that.**

Satan is, and has always been, on the wrong side of history. Rev 20 is seen in this light – Satan cannot deceive the nations any longer. The gospel goes forth to the nations. Christ is NOW plundering the house of the strong man, the kingdom of Satan.

Prior to Christ the Gentile world was in darkness. The people who walked in Darkness have seen a Great Light.

At the temptation of Christ, Satan offered the world, but Jesus refused him and exalted God instead. Paul notes that Satan is God of this age, but in Christ we have spiritual armor to stand firm.

Christ comes and casts out demons and shows his rule – Satan fall from heaven – Luke Jn 12:46 – “everyone who believes in ME no longer walks in darkness” Pentecost is outpouring of spirit for the nations – a reversal of Babel BECAUSE Christ has bound the strongman.

The gospel can go forth in this troubled world. The Word is at work and bears fruit.

Jesus reigns right now and is prevailing.

JESUS HAS WON, HE IS WINNING, HE WILL WIN.

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