

Mark 3:13-35
November 15, 2009
Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

Jesus continues to press His authority. This runs in conflict with the Pharisees. But we see something else going on that might be distressing for Jesus's disciples. Not only is He controversial with the Pharisee, He is also causing problems with His own disciples and His own immediate family.

It is clear that Jesus has come declaring something new in the midst of the Pharisaical religion that has grown old and cracked. The new thing is that the Messiah has arrived. But the Pharisees are unwilling to drink that new wine.

But we are surprised to see His own disciples and His own family at odds with Jesus. Certainly He could have made Himself clear to them?

Why are they having trouble with Jesus? The answer is the same one that we would all give. He has so much authority. He expects us to do exactly what He and the Father and the Spirit want us to do. The reason this gives us trouble is because of prevailing sin in our own lives. It runs afoul of our will to do His will. But Jesus makes it stark for us. Those who do His will are His disciples.

EXEGESIS

¹³And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth *unto him* whom he would: and they came unto him.

Jesus calls who He will. And those He calls come to Him.

¹⁴And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, ¹⁵And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

Jesus ordained twelve. We should see this as the New Israel. But even in the New Israel, there are those who would betray Jesus. They can be cut out of the covenant and replaced by other faithful members.

They are called to preach, given power to heal sickness and to cast out devils. We should understand that this power and authority come from Jesus and is extended to His Church. Also as we think about the Pharisees and scribes, they are unable to do any of these things. They do not preach with authority because they do not understand the Scriptures nor recognize

the times. They cannot heal and they do not have authority over demons. What Jesus has is now extended to His disciples. The Pharisees world is in grave danger of being rent obsolete.

Jesus does not call the multitudes, although the multitudes come to Him. He calls twelve and pours His life into them. Of course, He can and does minister to, heal, and save some people directly. But we should see that Jesus is doing something that can be replicated.

¹⁶And Simon he surnamed Peter; ¹⁷And James the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

Jesus calls twelve. That is the inner group. But among the twelve, there is even a closer group, perhaps a best friend. I think we can make the case that Jesus has two best friends, Peter and John. But we should not be amazed that Jesus picked three men to be His closest confidants.

Nicknames: One aspect of being on the in crowd is to have special names for each other. Jesus gives His friends names that are ironic or perhaps even mocking. We do the same thing. Maybe we call a man who is always dinking the ball up ahead a few feet, Sweetspot. He couldn't hit the sweetspot to save his life. But to call him Sweetspot is to acknowledge that you know him well enough to know this about him but also to say that you would be more than glad if he ever actually earned the name.

Jesus call Peter, Rock. Simon is reed. What is Peter? Well, he is certainly a reed. He is impetuous, emotional, somewhat unstable. If he were a rock, he would be a dangerous one. Both Jesus and Peter know this. But what eventually happens? Peter grows into a rock. He hits the sweetspot.

What about the Sons of Thunder? James is killed for his faith early in his ministry. John lives to be an old man. He does call it like he sees it. But the great message of John is love. A new commandment I give to, That ye love one another. That is a little different than trying to call fire down from heaven to kill those who would not side with him and James. They were Sons of Thunder but that was name was not given to them as a compliment. They needed to learn to be servants rather than commanders.

Jesus ordained the twelve to the ministry. Ordination was probably the laying on of hands. This is like the passing of the Spirit.

¹⁸And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite,

Andrew, who is Peter's brother. Here, however, he is listed not as one of the top three.

In this list, Matthew is significant. He is Levi, the publican and also the author of the book of Matthew.

Thomas is the one who doubts.

¹⁹And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

Judas always brings up the list at the end. But we should remember that Judas was really one of the twelve. He was in the inner circle of Jesus. Just that fact alone was not enough to save him. He believed in Jesus but stopped believing in Jesus. He was a prototypical seeker sensitive candidate. Here is what the gospel offers you. He wanted Christ on Judas's terms but not on Jesus's terms.

They were all together in a house. This was a close knit group. They knew each other. It is surprising that the other disciples did not suspect Judas sooner. Later, we are told that he kept the money box and that he pilfered from it. Isn't it odd that Jesus would pick him and that he would put him in charge in an area that was tempting to him?

²⁰And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. ²¹And when his friends heard *of it*, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

By now, Jesus's fame has spread. People are thronging to him for healing, for forgiveness, to have demons cast out of themselves or of family members. The house was so crowded that they could not even sit down to eat. This is real chaos. Imagine our little gatherings in the basement after church, or even our Psalm sings in homes. It is loud and boisterous. Now, imagine a lot more people in the house, to the extent that you are literally shoulder to shoulder and cannot find a place to sit down. This is what was going on.

What do Jesus's friends think about this? They think He has gone crazy. They say that He is beside Himself. They try to lay hold on Jesus. They want to shake Him up a bit, get Him back in His right mind.

In the beginning of this book, we are quickly shown that Jesus is in conflict with the scribes and Pharisees. They take issue with Him and so He turns to the common people. But now, even His own people take issue with Him. Jesus creates controversy and division wherever He goes.

The Pharisees and scribes were not ready for His new wine but neither are His own people. The Pharisees and scribes have old wineskins of their religious and political systems. Jesus does not fit in. But His own disciples do not get it, either. The Pharisees reject Jesus because He is so popular and a threat to them. The disciples are offended at Jesus because He is not making the most out of His moment to take control and is even threatening His position by doing outlandish things.

²²And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. ²³And he called them *unto him*, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

Beelzebub is the chief demon, Satan Himself. They are accusing Jesus of using the power of Satan to deliver and heal people.

Jesus explains how foolish their theory is. He says that any house divided against itself cannot stand. Incidentally, Jesus may be taking a strong swing at the house of Israel, itself. Of course, it was divided in the days of Solomon's sons and eventually fell.

During Jesus's days, the house of Israel was again divided. There were extreme factions that prove to bring down Israel, even before the Romans make an end to Jerusalem and the temple. It was not the Romans that destroyed Israel. Rather, Israel destroyed itself from within.

Furthermore, Satan is the author of chaos and discord. He causes sickness, death, disease, and demon possession wherever he can. For him to reverse this and heal people and cast out demons is antithetical to his world view and goals. He wants to thwart God's healing power on the Earth. It would make no sense for him to give up the ground that he has conquered. Jesus must make an end of him through direct confrontation. If Satan rises up against himself, this signals his end. Again, Jesus seems to be taking another shot at the Pharisees and Israel. They are dividing themselves and therefore about to have an end.

²⁷No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

Jesus is about to completely despoil the devil. We are told later that Jesus makes a show of the principalities and powers by overcoming them on the cross, making an open show of them. During His life, He was in preparation for that event. He began to bind the strong man. He was showing that He was more powerful than the devil. He had authority to bind and authority to take the spoils. The lives of the people are the spoils. Jesus is taken them back from the devil.

This is something that should have pleased the scribes and Pharisees as the overseers of the flock of Israel. But it did not please them. They were on the side of Satan and would rather have the people bound so that they could take them as their own spoils.

²⁸Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: ²⁹But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: ³⁰Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

All sins can be forgiven. That is the main gist of this passage from Jesus. But many have really struggled with the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. What is it, exactly? In this context, it is clear that the destruction of Jerusalem is in mind. Once the Jews reject Jesus in person, reject His resurrection as authoritative, and then reject the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, then it is clear that judgment is coming upon them. That is exactly what happened. As a result of the full force rejection of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, God does not save but damns them.

³¹There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

The Bible is pretty clear that Jesus has a mother and brothers. If the Lord had meant us to know that Jesus's brothers were not really His brothers, don't you think the Spirit would have explicitly clarified that fact? Unless the Scriptures give us some reason, either in the text, or in the context of the larger story, then we should take the words at face value.

Jesus did have brothers. This meant that Mary had conjugal relations with Joseph and bore children. This is important because later generations, rather early in the church, actually, began to teach that the perpetual state of virginity was the highest calling. Thus, they reasoned backwards that Mary must have always been a virgin.

But there are at least two problems with this.

- 1) It is an undue veneration for Mary. Why must we insist that Mary was sinless? Only Jesus was sinless. Mary sinned like everybody else. We do not need another savior. Mary was not the Savior. She simply bore the Savior. This undue veneration of Mary actually does harm to the real honor that she is due. Of all the young women living at the time, Mary was chosen by God to give birth to the Messiah. This is a very great honor. She was certainly the most blessed among women. Christians everywhere should give her great honor. However, the backlash of essentially making Mary a goddess has meant that many Protestants give her no honor at all. This is a shame. We should be able to speak of her with great reverence, just as we do other great saints of the faith, Polycarp, Augustine, Athanasius, Jerome, Calvin, Luther. Mary was most certainly as important as all of these men. But let's not worship her anymore than we would worship any of them.
- 2) It tends towards Gnosticism. If we cannot abide Mary having relations with Joseph and bearing children, then we must somehow think that this is less than honoring, perhaps even sinful. We have looked at the fallen and broken sexual relationship and decided that it is in itself somehow sinful. Just because God's good things and creations are perverted does not mean that we should call them sinful. Adam and Eve were married in the garden. They were one flesh. That is, they had sexual relations. This is a positive good and in no way a sin. So, we reject an other worldly spirituality that calls this world and this body sinful.

Why were his mother and brothers calling to Him? It was not so that they could worship Him. They were trying to get Him to stop doing what He was doing. They were trying to save Jesus. Were they willing to do His will? Apparently not. We are told later that Jesus brothers were not believing in Him. They do so after the Resurrection and Jesus's brother James becomes the great first bishop of Jerusalem. He is the one we believe wrote the book of James.

³²And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

The disciples in the house tell Jesus that His mother and brothers were looking for Him. At this point, He knows that they are looking for Him, not to do His will but so that they could thwart His will. They are acting like the Pharisees. Jesus uses this opportunity to upbraid His own family.

EXHORTATION

³³And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? ³⁴And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! ³⁵For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

You are only a true disciple of Jesus if you do His will. It is not enough to be in the covenant, like the Pharisees and Scribes. It is not enough to be in the in crowd, like Judas. It is not enough to have a blood relationship with Jesus, like His mother and brothers. It is not enough to be a ruler in the synagogue or even a priest in the temple. Groups from all of these stood against Jesus.

The only place that a true disciple must sit is beneath the feet of Jesus, like the woman who poured out the ointment on Jesus, wept at His feet and dried her tears with her hair. That is the true humility of true discipleship.

She came to Jesus for forgiveness and she worshipped Him as Lord.

It is not good, in fact, it is most wicked to have, Lord, Lord on our lips but me, me, in our actions.