



THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Study Guide Full
Mark 3:20-35
September 1, 2019

Throughout our Mark study in the past few months, we have focused on the nature of discipleship. In the last few weeks in particular, we have examined the nature of discipling relationships, asking such critical questions as:

How can we grow in Christ if we are not in any discipling relationships?

This week Anthony leads us into a text that continues to consider the nature of discipleship, in Jesus' redefinition of family in Mark 3; family is defined by relationships that are themselves defined by one's relationship to Christ—by doing God's will. It is in such relationships that we fully demonstrate our right understanding of who God is, avoiding the misunderstandings of Jesus' hometown folks and of the scribes. So we ask:

Are you in discipling relationships encouraging you to live out your understanding of Christ?

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.

Mark 3:20-35

Notes:

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."

31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." 33 "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. 34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Commentary Notes:

vv. 20-21. That Jesus' journey home will be a difficult one is suggested by Mark by the detail that nobody is "able even to eat," such is the commotion around Jesus on account of his ministry and the resulting crowds.

The Greek word choice in these verses highlights the awkwardness and difficulty of this scene for Jesus: his relatives (κρατῆσαι, *kratesai*) "seize him," a verb here implying force, convinced that he is "out of his mind," (ἑξέστη, *exeste*) as in "lost his rational senses." Be aware that the scribes would have had to travel more than 100 miles to levy their

Discussion Questions:

Study: Briefly review Jesus' interactions with the crowds thus far in Mark. Why, most likely, are Jesus' relatives denigrating Jesus here?

Discuss: How has nuclear family been hard for you in some way, especially in regards to the expectations of

accusations against Jesus.

v. 22. The conflict around Jesus reaches a boiling point as the scribes accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the (implied) power and authority of the ruler of demons. Here note that “Beelzebul,” likely meaning “lord (Baal) of the dwelling place” in Hebrew, was one of Satan’s aliases in NT times. In other words, they charge: although Jesus appears to be doing God’s work, he is operating as the agent of another lord—Satan.

vv. 23-26. Jesus responds to the scribes’ false charges with three parallel “If” statements centered upon two key words—“to divide,” *μερίζω (merizo)*, and “to stand,” *ἵστημι (histemi)* —to show the absurdity of the accusations. As such, he utilizes the language of “kingdom,” incorporating a political element to the parable and thereby suggesting political conflict to come in the conflict with the Jewish rulers. In doing so, he is not afraid to rhetorically refer to himself as Satan to point out their irrationality.

v 27. Context makes clear that the Jesus is referring to Satan as the “strong man,” as it is he himself who plunders

family?

Reflect: In what ways has your life and identity in Christ been misunderstood by others, and at times deliberately so? How did you cope with these difficult moments?

Confess: How have Christians been guilty, in past history or in the present, of accusing one another with an attitude similar to that of those around Jesus: “You are doing this or that by Satan!” If you feel led, confess, asking for forgiveness for the corporate sins of the church as such.

Discuss: Why do you think that Jesus responds to the crowds *in parables* at this moment of conflict?

Pray: Of these verses, Augustine writes in Lesson 21.35 of his *Sermons*, “The Holy Spirit makes those whom he gathers together undivided against themselves, by dwelling within those who have been cleansed, that they may be like those of whom it is written in Acts, ‘The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul.’” Pray for the unity of the church in Vancouver.

Discern: With regards to the truths of unity that Jesus expresses and Augustine maintains (see above), what is one step that you can take towards the unity of the church in Vancouver?

Meditate: How is this word of the binding of Satan speaking God’s grace and encouragement to you this week amidst the trials of life?

Satan's possessions. Note that Satan is not entirely vanquished, but that he is bound and neutralized.

vv. 28-30. Jesus is likely making comment upon the assertions of his relatives and of the Pharisees: the former, not recognizing who Jesus truly is, will be forgiven; the latter, accusing Jesus of being confined to the sphere of Satan, blaspheme against the Holy Spirit in that they attribute the work of the Spirit in him as Beelzebul's work.

vv. 31-35. His relatives having already declared that he is out of his mind, misunderstanding as they do his identity and ministry, Jesus takes the approach of the crowd to enumerate a new understanding of family based upon participation in Christ's ministry and God's mission. This understanding of family would have then, as it still does now, run against virtually all cultural traditions, especially those of the Middle East, in terms of valuing those of the same practices and praxis over one's relatives/tribe. Moreover, in the incorporation of "mother" and "sister"—along with the noticeable absence of "father"—Mark's family values are unmistakably at odds with first-century patriarchal society.

Listen: Listen to Hillsong's "Stronger," thanking Christ for his binding of the enemy.

Confess: Looking in the mirror, how do you see the image of Jesus' relatives in you, being confused by Jesus' identity? How do you see the image of the scribes in you, limiting the Spirit's freedom to work in expected and unorthodox ways? Ask for God's forgiveness upon our naturally presumptive hearts.

Meditate: With this text, how is the Father calling you to greater allegiance to the Son by the Spirit?

Reflect: When you first became a Christian, how did your new family of the church encourage you?

Discern: In this late summer, in what ways can you be demonstrating to your neighbourhood the reality that whenever the church is participating in God's mission—doing God's will—it is family?

Discern: How are you caring for your brothers and sisters in the family of FBC? How have you practiced the praxis of congregational care this week?

Discern: How are you caring for the future of the family of God? Are you serving with our Children and Families Ministry? Have you considered being a Youth leader? If you are a senior, how are you discipling those younger in age/faith?