

Today's sermon is centered around the Gospel of Mark chapter 3:20-35, with the main theme being "A Divided House Cannot Stand."

This morning, we are in the Gospel of Mark chapter 3, looking at the last section of the chapter in verses 20-35. Basically, what we find is a story within a story blended by Mark, what is called sandwiching, a literary device to indicate a lapse of time and heighten tension. Within the story, Jesus stops and tells a parable. Many of you will recognize the name C.S. Lewis, the great writer and apologist. Lewis expressed his concern that too many people were saying that Jesus was simply a good teacher, a great leader, a man with immense compassion and wisdom, humble, meek, and mild. However, Lewis said Jesus could not be all of those things because of one crucial matter: Jesus claimed to be God. Once Jesus made the claim, He eliminated himself from that category because good, wise, and sensible people do not think they are God, and people do not want you to believe they are God. So here we begin in verses 20-21, and Jesus' friends question his sanity, saying, "He is out of his mind." It was an intense moment. Lewis continues with this thought. People say they are ready to accept Jesus as a moral teacher but do not accept his claim to be God or the Creator. For Lewis, once an agnostic, says Jesus was neither a lunatic nor a fiend, and however strange or unlikely it may seem, "I have to accept the view that He was and is God."

It's crucial to remember the sequence of events leading up to the Gospel of Mark chapter 3:20-35. Jesus has already called his disciples, cast out an evil spirit, healed the sick and demon-possessed, cleansed a man with leprosy, healed a paralytic, and restored the shriveled hand of a man. As the crowds continue to follow him, he decides to appoint the twelve apostles. C. S. Lewis argues that labeling Jesus as a good teacher is not a viable option, as sensible people do not make such audacious claims. However, as we delve deeper, we encounter two types of opposition that Jesus faces. First, a well-intentioned but misguided interference from his family, and second, from the hostile religious leaders. Both groups fail to recognize his true identity, and we witness Jesus making a profound statement: if a house is divided, it cannot stand (v. 25). Those who are guided by the Holy Spirit are not part of the House of Satan; they are part of the household of God, the true family of faith, and citizens in the kingdom of heaven. Let us come together in prayer.

Merciful Father, let us come together to do your perfect will, as we cannot do it alone. We long for you to receive the glory of healing the divisions of this world. We pray for your strength that this family will seek you and live in the light of your presence. Help keep this family united and break any walls of division. In this, we pray, Amen.

Jesus would often withdraw to private places to teach and minister, and many followed him to those places where he visited to heal the sick. One such man was demon-possessed, blind, and mute. Think of Helen Keller. Anyhow, Jesus delivered him from the devil so he could speak and see, and people became astonished, asking among themselves if this Jesus could be the Messiah. That would be the kind of miracle Jesus did. Anyhow, a crowd follows Jesus to a house; so many people are around that the disciples complain they are missing an opportunity to eat. I can hear his family saying to themselves, "Here we go again," let's get him out of here; he's crazy, a lunatic for his enthusiasm for the Lord and evangelism for the lost. Mary is concerned about him,

for the angel told her before He was born who he was, that he would be the Son of the “Most High,” the Holy Child, in fact, God. She knew. Yet, thirty years after growing up in Nazareth, His family probably thought their brother Jesus was odd and did not believe in Him. But here in Mark’s story, the family and disciples felt that Jesus had a complete disregard for their needs, not to mention a complete disregard for his care of himself. They thought he was going to get himself killed! He has lost his senses!

In verse 21, “When those of His family went out to take custody of Him.” And so, they attempt to take him away, not gingerly but forcibly. What a lunatic! You are out of your mind! Go away, thinks Jesus. I’m mad. His family comes up with this plan to rescue him. To get him away from the threatening crowd. And what do the scribes and Pharisees do? They attack his spirituality, saying demons possess him, describing his work as descending not from God but from the devil. They explained that “Beelzebub possesses him, meaning “lord of the house of the underworld.” Maybe a simpler term would be “godfather of the Mafia.”

As we approach the third chapter of Mark, we should realize that Mark is writing because we do not yet have any human testimony in which a person says, “I believe that You are the Son of God.” We do, however, have two testimonies, one from God the Father in Chapter 1:11 at the baptism of Jesus saying, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Then we have the testimony of a demon in 1:24 who says, “We know who You are: the Holy One of God.” It wasn’t until following the crucifixion of Jesus that Mark in 15:39 gives us the first human testimony from a Roman centurion at the cross. “Surely, this man was the Son of God.” It is fantastic that through the ministry of Jesus, people had difficulty seeing who Jesus was. Their hearts were so hard. They witnessed his healing, the banishing of demons, showing his power over the physical world, coming from the experience of seeing that evidence firsthand to faith, the signs before them, they did not believe in Him. The Pharisees believed, but they did not confess Him for fear of being put out of the synagogue, longing for the approval of men rather than the approval of God. A house divided that could not stand.

Jesus proceeds to show the absurdity of their accusation using an illustration, a parable, saying, “How can Satan cast out Satan?” Jesus’ point is that it is impossible for Satan, who would have no desire or motive to operate against himself. That would be a civil war to divide himself against his kingdom. But here is where the rubber meets the road. Jesus identifies Satan as the strong man, but Jesus is the stronger one who liberates people once and for all, entering Satan’s house to rescue them from darkness to light.

In verse 31, there is another important story about the Pharisees: “Then his mother and brothers arrived.” They came from Nazareth to Capernaum. They called out to him. The crowd surrounds him, and they say to him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for You.” Here was Mary, a believer, and his half-brothers and sisters who did not believe, and Mary wanted to come to protect Him. Mary probably remembers when Jesus was twelve, and they went to Jerusalem, and they started home, realizing then that He was not there. They went back to find Him and found him in the temple. He’s asking questions of the doctors. What are you doing? Why have you done this to us? He says, “I must be about My Father’s business.” Jesus had just reached the age where He was the Son of the Law. “You are not the authority in my life

anymore.” In verse 33, we see a most interesting reply: Jesus answers the crowd who are saying, your mother and brothers have come for you. He begins, “Who are My mother and My brothers?” Indeed, he knew exactly who his mother, brothers, and sisters were. He loved his mother and brothers right into his kingdom, for on the cross, “Mary was there with His brothers.” He loved them enough to save them. Some months later, they confessed Him as Lord as they gathered in the Upper Room.

In his epistle letter, the brother of Jesus introduces himself. “I, James, a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Jude, his other brother, introduces his epistle, “Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ.” He loved them, and they came to love Him, submitting to Him as slaves to their Lord. In verse 34, He answers His own question, looking about at those sitting around Him, “Who are my brothers and sisters? All of you who believe in Me and who does the will of God, are my brother and sister and mother.

The crowd that has gathered around Jesus has come in faith and hope, not judgment and condemnation of who Jesus is showing himself to be as he does God's will. The crowd came looking for a relationship. They have all found their way to Jesus. Gathering around Jesus are most likely other than Jesus' family, and their faith does not pose any threat to the Kingdom of God. Genuine members of God's household are those who do not stand in his way, for those who have come are obedient. The Catholic Church likes to single out the relationship with Mary, but I have to tell you that is not the relationship Jesus is telling us about. The only relationship that matters is the one who obeys the Word of God in the gospel of Christ. Those who confess Him as Lord. The writer of Hebrews tells us in chapter 2, “that we are Christ's brother, and He is not ashamed to call us brothers.” Before I close, I'd like to share a bit of history.

At the Illinois Republican State Convention in June 1858, where Abraham Lincoln became nominated for president, He opened his speech in this way: “If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it. We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated, with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased but has constantly augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis has been reached and passed: ‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe this government cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved, and I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other.”

In closing, we know that Jesus has proven Satan is no match, for there is no way that the world will be handed over to the forces of evil. I will say this much: our country is divided. Our political system in Washington is divided. Church denominations have turned against God, deliberately abandoning loyalty and trust in His Holy Word. The people of the world refuse to follow, obey, or recognize moral living. Brothers and sisters, we are living in the end times, going after the teachings of demons. But I stand before you to say that our world belongs to a sovereign God. My prayer is that we not stand in the way or align ourselves with the forces of evil, for a “Divided House that is against itself, Cannot, and will not be able to Stand.” Amen.