

My Brother and Sister and Mother

Proper 5

Pastor Josh Frazee

Mark 3:20-35

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

This morning our text gives us a brief glimpse of Jesus' family. Reading a bit of a commentary on this text, it "cannot be convincingly decided from the records we possess" whether the brothers mentioned were from Mary and Joseph after Mary had given birth to Jesus, whether they were from Joseph from a previous marriage, or from where they had come (Lenski). What we do find in our text is that they went out to lay hold of Him.

Has your family ever thought you were crazy? Granted, some things we might do can be pretty "out there" sometimes. But at a time when you were right in your line of thinking, has your family ever thought you were dead wrong and that you needed to be stopped?

It is the idea today that "blood is thicker" than most things, if not everything. For that reason, it can be very hard to stick to something you know is right if your whole family is against it. Again, that can refer to any number of things for which you might be fighting, and you may be in the right for each of those things. But today's text is about fighting for what is right spiritually; making a stand for the Scriptures—where Jesus had to do just that despite having the leaders of the Temple saying that He was doing His work by the power of Beelzebul, and against what His family thought was sane.

Verse 1

"(Jesus) went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'"

Before the Pharisees make their judgment that Jesus must be driving out demons by Beelzebul, Jesus simply returned home, bringing with Him His new-found disciples. When the crowds heard that Jesus was home, they crowded around His disciples and Him so much that they could not even eat. And as soon as His family heard it, they decided that Jesus was no longer operating rationally, and they went to stop Him.

The reason why Jesus' family concluded that He was out of His mind is not for certain. What has been recorded is that they went to stop Him.

But do you suppose it entered the minds of Jesus' family members just who it was they were going to stop? This was the One who had been born of a virgin in a stable—and not just any virgin, but their own mother! This was also the One who had remained behind in the Temple and had asked the teachers questions while they had caravanned away. This was the One about whom God had spoken from the clouds at His baptism. This was the One who had converted water, two hydrogen atoms and one of oxygen, into wine, a drink produced from grapes, as His first miracle at the wedding in Cana. Do you suppose they were thinking of these things when they went to stop Jesus, claiming He was out of His mind?

What about you? Have you thought something from God's Word was crazy? If so, do you remember that Jesus was the One born of the Virgin Mary? Do you remember that Jesus is the One who remained behind and asked questions in the Temple? Do you consider that God's Word is where we hear that God Himself spoke about Jesus' baptism from the heavens? Yes, some things in God's Word are a little "out there"—like changing water into wine—and yet it is still God's Word—not the word of Beelzebul or Satan, as we hear in the next verses.

Verse 2

“(Then) the scribes...came down from Jerusalem (and) were saying, ‘He is possessed by Beelzebul,’ and ‘by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.’ And he called them to him and said to them in parables, ‘How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end...Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin’—for they were saying, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’”

If Jesus’ family believed He was crazy, the scribes believed worse: they believed He was possessed by Beelzebul! That’s the word—that’s the gossip—they were spreading about Him. Today we know that that’s not the case, but what about at Jesus’ time? Did those hearing the scribes know Jesus yet, or were they just trusting what the scribes were saying? Were they putting everything in the best construction? Did they go to speak to Jesus themselves like Nicodemus?

How often might you be accused of the same? Do you just take the word of someone about someone else? Or do you defend your neighbor’s reputation?

Jesus didn’t need anyone to defend Him. He knew what the scribes were saying and He called them over to speak with them. Then, in parables, He taught them that Satan could not cast out Satan. A house divided against itself—even Satan’s—could not remain standing.

But Jesus also warned them: “all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.”

It is never wise to go against God and His Word—no matter how crazy God’s Word may sound. In this text, Jesus had not done too many things which may have even been considered all that ludicrous. He had healed a man with a withered hand—and in some of the Gospel accounts, a demoniac—prior to our reading. But in the text itself, Jesus had simply gone home and a great crowd had gathered. And yet the scribes had heard what He had done and were falsely accusing Him of ultimately working with Satan. Even Jesus’ family had been on their way to try to stop Him.

Verse 3

“(H)is mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, ‘Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.’ And he answered them, ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.’”

Jesus’ family attempted to get in the way of His work; but He showed them that there is something more important than anything else—even more important than blood or family: His work of salvation, the Gospel. By claiming those around Him as His brother and sister and mother, Jesus was saying that He was going to do His mission despite the worries of His earthly family.

Ultimately, Jesus would head to the cross to die for all sinners, including His mother and His brothers. He would pay the price for their sins, and for the sins of all people. If He had relented to His family's desire for Him to stop, they and we would all be doomed.

So when it comes to doing God's will, it is better to do it and be thought crazy than to not do it and not accomplish the purpose which God has set before you. Unfortunately, we fail so often to do this. We fail to love God more than our own families. When we do, we sin against Him. But again, thanks be to God through His Son, Jesus, that Jesus did not leave it there but went to the cross. There He paid the price for all of your sins, including loving your family—your brothers and sisters and mothers and every member of your family—more than Him.

Jesus did this despite being considered crazy and out of His mind—and even demon-possessed—for doing it. And He did it all for you. In Jesus' Name. Amen.