



READ MARK 3:20-35

Pursue

This week in our text, we will walk through Mark's first literary sandwich, a device he employs often. The author will begin with one story and end with the same or a corresponding story, but in the middle, he will use a story that helps the reader understand the stories at the beginning and end. In our text this week, we begin with a story of Jesus' family and end with a story of Jesus' family, and sandwiched between is a story about Jesus and the scribes. Mark uses these stories to help his readers understand who the true family of God is.

- Our text this week opens up with a brief picture of Jesus' family and their concern that he is "out of his mind." They want to seize or control him because they believe he has gone crazy. His family has missed who he truly is, the Son of God, the Messiah, come to save His people. Because of this, his family aligns themselves with the enemies of Jesus who desire to silence him. This is a stark reminder that proximity to Jesus is not enough. (We will examine that further later.) In what ways are we tempted even now to miss the true identity of Jesus, as Jesus' family does here? What implications does that have in our relationship with him when we do?
- Meanwhile, the scribes think that Jesus is demon-possessed. They acknowledge that His ministry is supernatural, but they assign the power of His ministry to "an unclean spirit" rather than to the Holy Spirit. They state that they believe Jesus has aligned Himself with satan. A sin Jesus calls unforgivable. Considering this sin in our lives is a sober task, but it is one that can be fruitful. However, these verses can cause much anxiety in their readers because they can fear that one could accidentally or ignorantly fall into this sin and be forever condemned. Yet, Jason Meyer says this of the unforgivable sin,

*"The eternal (unforgivable) sin is **perpetual unbelief** that **refuses** to call what Jesus does good and calls it evil instead. In that state, forgiveness can never come, because forgiveness is only found by embracing Jesus as the Son of God."*

Despite being those who should know God most intimately, the scribes can not tell the difference between the work of God and the work of satan. So much so that they perpetually and willfully accuse the Son of God of working on behalf of satan. This reveals the hardness of the hearts of the scribes, they do not embrace Jesus as the Son of God and, therefore, can not receive forgiveness.

A good indicator that we are not walking in the unforgivable sin is sensitivity, tenderness, and a genuine desire to repent of our sins. As we read in our text this week (v. 28), all sins and blasphemies can and will be forgiven. By God's grace, in what ways have you cultivated sensitivity to the Spirit in your life this week? Can you think of a time recently when you have experienced the prompting of the Spirit to repent? Share that story to encourage others.

- Jesus uses a parable of a strong man being bound while his home is being plundered as a picture of Jesus' work in the world to save His people from the kingdom of darkness. How does this picture strengthen your faith in Jesus? Is there an area of sin or suffering that growing in faith in Jesus' spiritual warfare on your behalf would bring comfort or courage? How can your group pray for you in that?
- Our literary sandwich then ends with another story of Jesus' family. Again, they are seeking him to take him home to stop all of this nonsense. But hearing of their desire for Him, Jesus redefines who the true family of God is. He clarifies that it is not those who know a lot about God, like the scribes. It is not even those who share earthly familial bonds and proximity to him, like his family. No, Jesus states that the true family of God is made up of "whoever does the will of God." As we stated earlier, proximity to Jesus is not enough. Jesus makes it clear that allegiance/obedience to Jesus, the Son of God, is what matters. While Jesus' allegiance is being questioned by the scribes and demanded of from his family here, Mark is calling his listeners and readers, us, to assess where our allegiance lies. What should fuel obedience for those who belong to Jesus? What do you think allegiance/obedience to Jesus looks like today in your life?

Practice

- **Followers & Enemies Chart.** Throughout Mark, we will see two main types of people: followers of Jesus and enemies of Jesus. While the narrator will not often explicitly label someone as a follower or enemy, the reader can use the actions or responses described in the text to determine if someone is a follower or enemy. Continue to add to this chart things you noticed this week about the followers of Jesus and things you noticed about the enemies of Jesus.

Proclaim

- **OPTION 1 |** The weather is getting nice! If you are meeting in person, consider meeting outside your home either in the front yard or a nearby park, to provide opportunities to meet and invite neighbors to your group!
- **OPTION 2 |** Go on a prayer walk! Walk around your neighborhood using what you see as fuel for prayer. Pray for people, homes, businesses, community groups, and community needs. Ask God to open your eyes to where He is at work and to fill your heart with love for your neighborhood.