

Have you ever felt like an outsider, like you were excluded?

- I knew someone so insecure that they would walk into any circle of people talking, stand in the middle, and insist on being caught up on the conversation – as if they were being talked about.
- The Chinese character for foreigner, means ‘outside person.’ There were times we felt like we were outside people. One time - I forget where – because of my ethnicity, I was not allowed to stay in the same hotel as my students. Instead, I was forced to stay in a room with strangers. There was just a blanket tacked over the door opening. There were maybe 5 or 6 other men on cots, and 1,000 bed bugs.
- There is nothing so crushing as exclusion or loneliness.

We are simply going through the book of Mark, looking at it segment by segment. Its key verse is: ‘For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45 NIV).’ This one verse gives the outline and purpose for Mark’s biography of Jesus:

Prologue, Mk 1:1-13 - ‘For the Son of Man’

Service, Mk 1:16-8:30 - ‘Did not come to be served, but to serve,’ This is where we are at today, looking at Jesus and his service to people.

Suffering, Mk 8:31-15:47 - ‘And to give his life as a ransom for many.’

Epilogue, Mk 16:1-20.

Today, we look at the Mark 3:7-35. Here, Jesus’ family comes for a visit and Jesus uses this opportunity to contrast his true family from outsiders.

True Family

Mark 3:7-35



Mark was a brilliant writer, and people who know these things can see literary segments that are designed to be a unit.

Today’s segment presents us with a contrast between Jesus’ growing popularity and the small number of people who really know him. The bird’s eye view is that ...

On the one hand, there are those who don't know him:

- The crowds who are just wanting to be healed and set free from the demonic
- The Pharisees who see him as a threat.
- And even Jesus' family who think he is mad.

On the other hand, there are the those who know:

- The demons know who Jesus is.
- The twelve disciples believe.
- Whoever does God's will belongs to God's family.

Mark wants us to ask ourselves, 'who is this Jesus?' He wants us to see Jesus' unique power and authority and to choose him as our Savior.

1. Crowds, 3:7-12.

'Jesus went out to the lake with his disciples, and a large crowd followed him. They came from all over Galilee, Judea, ⁸Jerusalem, Idumea, from east of the Jordan River, and even from as far north as Tyre and Sidon. The news about his miracles had spread far and wide, and vast numbers of people came to see him. ⁹Jesus instructed his disciples to have a boat ready so the crowd would not crush him. ¹⁰He had healed many people that day, so all the sick people eagerly pushed forward to touch him. ¹¹And whenever those possessed by evil spirits caught sight of him, the spirits would throw them to the ground in front of him shrieking, "You are the Son of God!" ¹²But Jesus sternly commanded the spirits not to reveal who he was (Mk 3:7-12 NLT)'

Word of Jesus' miraculous power has spread so much that people from all over Israel have sought him out for healing. Unfortunately, they do not understand his mission. They see him only as a miracle worker. The crowds are so great, Jesus needs an escape option, a boat ready to take him across the lake. Nevertheless, Jesus' ministers. He ...

- Heals 'many.'
- Delivers those who were demon possessed.

The people do not recognize Jesus as Messiah, but the demons do. At Jesus' command, they cannot speak. This is an ancient understanding of power, where 'knowledge of the precise name or quality of a person confers mastery over him.'

- For example, if I know you are having an affair, I have blackmail power over you by whispering in your ear 'adulterer.'
- Even though they recognize his real identity, he cannot allow them equal power by letting a liar's testimony be equal to his own.

This also fits with Mark's theme of a 'secret Messiah.'¹ Mark shows us that Jesus desired to reveal who he really is at his choosing. This is why Jesus commanded the demons to not reveal who he really is, why he avoids public attention, seeks seclusion, and speaks to his disciples in private.

Mark's 'Secret Messiah' Theme ...

- Jesus does not want to be forced into political / military leadership. John picked up on it once: 'Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself (Jn 6:15 NIV).'
- Messiahship cannot be fully known until after the death & resurrection. Even though Mark's readers, know that Jesus is the Messiah, Mark portrays the disciples as not really knowing until after the resurrection.
- Jesus' identity is slowly revealed.
 1. In the early parts of the Galilean ministry silence about Jesus' identity is kept.
 2. It is partially lifted as he approaches Jerusalem – Peter declares 'you are the Christ (Mk 8:29),' but Jesus warned not to tell anyone.
 3. It is fully disclosed before the Sanhedrin – Jesus says, 'I AM' and that is blasphemy enough to execute him.

2. Choosing the Twelve, 3:13-19.

'Afterward Jesus went up on a mountain and called out the ones he wanted to go with him. And they came to him. ¹⁴Then he appointed twelve of them and called them his apostles. They were to accompany him, and he would send them out to preach, ¹⁵ giving them authority to cast out demons. ¹⁶These are the twelve he chose: Simon (whom he named Peter), ¹⁷James and John (the sons of Zebedee, but Jesus nicknamed them "Sons of Thunder"), ¹⁸Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus, Simon (the zealot), ¹⁹Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him) (Mk 3:13-19 NLT)?"'

Just a couple of quick thoughts here:

1. Jesus identifies his 12 disciples on a mountain. Mountains seem to be where humankind meets with God. There is the Mt. of Transfiguration, the Mount of Olives, and Mt. Sinai where God spoke to Moses and affirmed their relationship. It is where the 12 tribes camped out before God to listen to his voice. There are underlying Exodus themes here.

¹ Edward Adams, *Parallel Lives of Jesus: A Guide to the Four Gospels* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), p. 58.

2. This is a pattern for us, too. We are called out of the world to accompany him and learn. Then, we are to be sent out to preach, having Jesus' authority. These 12 would be sent out two by two (Mk 6:6b-13).

3. Jesus and the Pharisees, 3:20-30.

'One time Jesus entered a house, and the crowds began to gather again. Soon he and his disciples couldn't even find time to eat. ²¹When his family heard what was happening, they tried to take him away. "He's out of his mind," they said (3:20-21 NLT).'

Often Mark will interject a story within a story to highlight something. Here Mark interjects the criticism of the Pharisees, that Jesus is demon possessed into a story about Jesus' family. Mark wants us to see this parallel:

Parallel:

- 'He's out of his mind (v. 21).' – Jesus' biological family.
- 'He's possessed by an evil spirit (v. 30).' – the Scribes.
- 'They stood outside (v. 31).' – Jesus' biological family.
- '(Inside) There was a crowd sitting around Jesus (v. 32).' - Those who do God's will.

Emphasis: Jesus' true family are those who believe and do God's will.

If a detective hears the exact same testimony from the witnesses, he should doubt the accuracy of the testimony – it has likely been tainted. Various perspectives are likely more accurate. In the same way, Mark gives us an accurate picture of Jesus because not everyone believed. We get a very raw picture of Jesus, not just from the believers. For example,

- Jesus' command to not tell anyone of the healing was disobeyed, Mk 1:40-45.
- Jesus could not do many miracles in his hometown, Mk 6:6. Because they lacked faith.
- It took two attempts to heal a blind man, Mk 8:22-25.
- And here, his brothers believe he is mad. It is likely that Mary went along to restrain these sons as much as possible.

Therefore, Mark presents an accurate picture. He is not just a partisan who sugarcoats the story.

'But the teachers of religious law who had arrived from Jerusalem said, "He's possessed by Satan, the prince of demons. That's where he gets the power to cast out demons." ²³ Jesus called them over and responded with an illustration. "How can Satan cast out Satan?" he asked. ²⁴ "A kingdom divided by civil war will collapse. ²⁵ Similarly, a family splintered by feuding will fall apart. ²⁶ And if Satan is divided and fights against himself, how can he stand? He would never survive. ²⁷ Let me illustrate this further. Who is powerful enough to enter the house of a strong man and plunder his goods? Only someone even stronger—someone who could tie him up and then plunder his house. ²⁸ "I tell you the truth, all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven, ²⁹ but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. This is a sin with eternal consequences." ³⁰ He told them this because they were saying, "He's possessed by an evil spirit (Mk 3:20-30 NLT).'"

Here, Mark breaks from the family story to focus on the scribes.

- It is likely these scribes came to examine his miracles and determine if Capernaum is a 'seduced city,' a city that has fallen prey to an apostate preacher. They accuse Jesus of 1) being demon possessed and 2) of casting out demons by demonic power.
- Jesus answers the second one with common sense: if Satan destroys his own demons, he won't be around long.
- By analogy, Jesus explains that only someone stronger than Satan can displace and destroy him.

Jesus possesses the Holy Spirit who empowers him to destroy the Devil's work.
Friends, can you see who Jesus really is?

Regarding blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, note the primary thesis: 'I tell you the truth, all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven (v. 28).'

- The secondary clause: 'But anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. This is a sin with eternal consequences (v. 29).'
- Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is being so hardened to the Holy Spirit that you deny the power of God to forgive you. It is the 'conscious and deliberate rejection of the saving power and grace of God.'²
 1. If you are worried you have committed this unforgiveable sin, you have not. Your worry is an indication of your sensitive heart towards the Holy Spirit.
 2. These religious leaders were so hardened that they mistook God's work for Satan's.
- What is the primary clause? 'All sin and blasphemy can be forgiven.'

² William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark NICNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 145.

4. True Family, 3:31-35.

'Then Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him. They stood outside and sent word for him to come out and talk with them. ³²There was a crowd sitting around Jesus, and someone said, "Your mother and your brothers are outside asking for you (Mk 3:31-32 NLT)."'

- We return to the story of his family. Jesus was a little wary of his brothers at this early stage. They encouraged him to reveal himself in Jerusalem: 'No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret (Jn 7:4 NIV).' Jesus replied that the time is not right, yet (Jn 7:3-10).

'Jesus replied, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" ³⁴Then he looked at those around him and said, "Look, these are my mother and brothers. ³⁵Anyone who does God's will is my brother and sister and mother (Mark 3:33-35 NLT)."'

Jesus is not teaching us to abandon our families,³ but he is making a deep point about being a Christ-follower. Life in the Kingdom of God brings a new family:

- God's family is not about biology, it is about grace and obedience.
- God's family is not limited by genetics, it is open to all – 'anyone.'
- God's family welcomes all who believe, all who receive his grace, who obey his voice.
- 'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God (Jn 1:12-13 NIV).' You can become a part of God's family; you can belong by believing in Jesus.
- Can you see who Jesus really is?

Conclusion.

During our childless years, I prayed Psalm 113 daily: 'He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; ⁸he seats them with princes, with the princes of his people. ⁹He settles the childless woman in her home as a happy mother of children (Ps 113:7-9 NIV).'

- God promises a reversal: the poor sitting with princes and the childless settled as a mother.

³ 'Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!" ²⁹"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹But many who are first will be last, and the last first (Mk 10:28-31 NIV)."'

- In 2000 and 2004, our daughters Annie and Jolynn were placed in Connie's arms. They are our daughters as if they were naturally born to us. Our desire for children settled us in our home as happy parents.

But Paul used the word picture of adoption from the child's perspective: 'For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ ... the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children (Ro 8:14-16 NIV).'

- Before God's adoption, we were lonely, isolated, cut-off, and orphans. We were outsiders, excluded from really belonging. Sin separates us from God's plan for our lives.
- Jesus' one sentence sermon tells us how to become God's children: 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news (Mk 1:15 NIV)!'.
- If we repent of our sins and believe that Jesus died for us, we are immediately adopted into God's family, we belong, we are an insider.

ALTAR WORKERS: I want people who know how to pray to come to the front now.

The Prodigal son is a great example. He leaves home and squanders his life and fortune. But he repents of his sin but returning to his father, returning home where he belongs. It says, 'But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him (Lk 15:20 NIV).'

- Do you want your sins forgiven?
- Do you want to belong to God's family?
- Do you feel distant from God?
- Do you believe?

PRAY.

Come to these people now. They are standing with arms wide open to symbolize God's welcome. They will rejoice with you and pray with you.