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Who Is Jesus? *Lunatic, Demoniac, or Family?*

Mark 3:20-35

Introduction

I was misread and pegged as being a certain type of person by a guy who prided himself in pegging people into categories of his own understanding. Once someone has you pegged as “that type of person” I have found that it is very hard to change their perception.

I pegged Lori’s grandfather incorrectly. He was so mild mannered and followed two steps behind his wife just doing what she said, that I thought that was all there was to Ralf. He was simply the man who did what his wife told him. When Hazel passed away, Ralf bloomed into a very different person than I had understood him to be. He would take trips of his own planning to see the grandkids and great grandkids, he cooked for himself, kept the house up, paid all the bills... He was a very capable person with lots to offer in and of himself apart from being Hazel’s husband.

I have pegged some people as wonderful when time reveals the reality of a dark side that is darker than the wonderful.

I have pegged some people as down right mean, when time has told me that what I perceived as meanness was in fact an expression of love perfect for the life situation that I had oversimplified.

I bet you pegged a few people wrong in your time too.

I grew up playing: climbing trees, building forts, throwing rotten guava’s at cars, surfing... I guess you can say I was not an academic. I was a lover of all things fun. Somehow I got into the College of Business Administration at University of Hawaii at Manoa and double majored in Accounting and Management Information Systems. I remember my mom asking me about my

studies and what I was doing. When I told her my degree program, she said, “Oh Johnny, you can’t do that.”

Even your own mother can peg you wrong.

This morning we are continuing our journey through the Gospel of Mark focusing on how Mark reveals who Jesus is. We have already seen that Jesus was misunderstood by the people who were following Him around the countryside. They knew Him to be the healer who could fix their physical afflictions and they missed that He was so much more than that. And in the passage before us to day, Mark 3:20-35, we will see that even His own family appears to have pegged Him wrong as had the leaders of His family of faith.

What we don’t want to do with people and most importantly with Jesus is peg Him wrong and believe Him to be something He is not, or something less than He is.

So, let’s read Mark 3:20-35 and learn from their mistakes of others so that we don’t fall into the same trap, and along the way we can sharpen our understanding of who this most important of all men is.

Mark 3 beginning if verse 20... Who was Jesus perceived to be by His family of birth and by His family of faith?

I. Jesus was a Lunatic to His Family of Birth

We see here that even Jesus’ family saw Him as one who, as verse 21 says had, “...lost His senses.” That is the first part of your outline: Jesus was a lunatic to His family of birth.

This strikes me because Jesus mother Mary had such a clear history of divine revelation of who Jesus was. She knew He had been miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit. She had angelic pronouncements about Him. She had prophetic words spoken to her about His unique identity. How could the matriarch of the family think one born under such special circumstances be anything but crazy, and anything less than totally of God?

This reminds me of John the Baptist and his questioning of who Jesus was. At first he did not question, in fact he pointed Jesus out to his own disciples and told them to follow Him. But then the fallen world seeped back into John’s life and thoughts... imprisoned and facing death he sent word to Jesus... “Are you the One or should we look for another?”

Maybe there is more to it, but I have found that day-to-day life in the natural fallen world with its hardships and challenges and distraction has a way of stripping us of our awareness of the supernatural reality of God. We can receive God’s 11th hour provision time and time again convincing us in the moment that God is a wonderful provider of all we need. (Life lesson from CCH) And then in the next moment of want, we find ourselves back at square one...“Will God provide? Does God even care?”

Why did His family think He had lost His senses? Because they were relying on their natural senses to judge who He was. His brother's and sisters new Him to be the kid they grew up with. He ate, cried, slept, played like the other kids in the neighborhood. He grew up and learned dad's profession like the other boys. And here He is all famous and thinking He is the healer of the sick, the authoritative interpreter of Scriptures, the forgiver of sins, the King of the Kingdom, the Son of God... It was too much to reconcile with the kid who had grown up in their house.

Now how about us today? No historian seems to question the existence of a real man from Nazareth named Jesus; and we know the Bible teaches Him to be the Son of God; but really, in this day and age of science and "enlightened" thinking, many people struggle with their understanding of Jesus as God's Christ and Son. They bring to the discussion of His identity their underlying presuppositions, especially their anti supernatural bias – there is no supernatural so I don't know who Jesus was, but He can't be the Son of God. Maybe He was a lunatic – self deceived, only thinking Himself to be the Son of God. If those thoughts are not in your own mind they are the questions of the skeptics you know.

Everyone can misjudge Jesus. Even Jesus' family had it in them to misjudge who He was. Don't think we don't have it in us to misjudge others including and especially Jesus. We do. Your understanding of Jesus is flawed – so is mine. So let's not stop sitting at His feet as humble learners. So let's not stop partnering with Him in the mission He sends us on. We get to know Him better and better, not each day of our lives, but each day we spend with Him.

Mark does not offer a correction to the family's misperception of who Jesus was, it just hangs there and he moves on to the telling of another group's misperception of Jesus. This time it is not Jesus' family of birth but His family of faith. Let's read again verse 22...

II. Jesus was a Demoniac to His Old Family of Faith

Jesus was born into a Jewish family and the faith of Judaism. The descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob formed the nation of Israel. They lived together; separate from the rest of the nations of the world, as God's chosen people. Jesus was born into a rich and longstanding community of faith – a community whose members saw themselves to be in a covenant relationship with God as outlined in the Laws that God gave them through Moses.

The scribes of verse 22 were members of the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day. They assessed Jesus to be one possessed and empowered by Beelzebub, who context clarifies to be "the ruler of the demons" (v.22) and none other than Satan (v.23). That is the second point of the outline this morning; Jesus was a demoniac to His old family of faith.

Wow! That is quite the difference of understanding. Mark has so far revealed Jesus to be the Son of God (1:1, 1:11, 2:7, 3:11) and the King of the Kingdom of God (1:15) and the religious leaders of the day saw Jesus to be one possessed by Satan. Talk about extreme understandings of the person of Jesus. He is the Son of God to Mark; He is Satan to the leaders of His family of faith.

For this misunderstanding of Jesus' identity He DOES offer a corrective. Let's read verses 23-27 again.

Jesus argues here that He is neither Satan nor empowered by Satan. But rather He is one who has come to bind Satan and then plunder his house.

As we read this passage we realize that we have come across a rather disturbing thought. In verse 29 we see Jesus mention that there is a sin that is unforgivable, a sin that if it is committed will carry forward your guilt for all eternity. To those who value the forgiveness of God this can be a disturbing thought. Have I committed a sin that God will not forgive? Let me just speak to this briefly. The sin that Jesus says is unpardonable is the sin of assessing and declaring Jesus to be One empowered for His ministry by Satan. That is a very particular sin. Do you believe that Jesus is empowered for His ministry by Satan who possesses Him? If not, you have not committed the unpardonable sin. Idolatry is not the unpardonable sin; neither is adultery, nor is murder, nor covetousness... Now not giving to your local church may be...just kidding.

I have heard it argued and I believe it to be true that if you still value God's forgiveness, that is evidence in and of itself that you have not committed the unforgivable sin.

Trans. Is he a demoniac? His argument shows: No. He is not a demoniac as His old family of faith thought. Well then who is He? Is He a lunatic like His family of birth thought? In the next verses we see His family showing up on the scene to take custody of their "crazy" family member. But in the course of dealing with His family of birth Jesus defines His identity in His new family of faith. I encourage you to pay careful attention to this next section. This is directly applicable to us. God adopts people into His family based on their relation to Jesus. Who is Jesus? My last point is that...

III. Jesus is Family to His New Family of Faith

Let's re-read verses 31-35...

The misconception being debunked here is that being family makes you family, i.e., being blood related to Jesus qualifies you for special treatment by Him. This recurring theme is back again. It is not about the natural order, but the supernatural. It is not about your first birth from your mother and earthly father into your family of origin, it is about your second birth into your new family of faith – the family of where God is your heavenly Father.

We will see that Jesus often employs hyperbole – extreme language – to prove a point. Here His words almost seem hurtful or disrespectful to His family, but they are more correctly seen as strong to prove an important point. That point is that how you respond to Jesus is more important than into whose family you were born.

I used to think I was special (somehow better or more privileged) because I was born in Hawaii. That doesn't make me better, it just makes me born in Hawaii, something I had nothing to do with. I used to think I was special because I was raised on Tantalus, a mountain above Honolulu with sunsets to die for, cool rain to make clean starts to each morning, and quietness

and beauty like few other places. But that doesn't make me special or better, it just makes me raised on Tantalus, another thing I can take no credit for. I used to think that I was somehow special because I was the son of Nat and Gail Potter, but that does not make me special, it just makes me their son, certainly I had nothing to do with that.

The point here that Jesus is making is that your family of birth that you had nothing to do with is less important than your family of faith which you do have something to do with – your family of faith requires your intentional membership, your participation. This holds true even for Jesus' family members who we would look at as special because they were His family. Jesus is making it clear that the more important family members to Him are those who **do** something. What is that something that Jesus true family members do? Look at what Jesus says again in verses 33-35...

“Looking about at those **sitting around Him**...” Oh, my gosh, we are back to the importance of sitting at the feet of Jesus? I sound like a broken record with my high value of the importance of the story of Martha who busied herself with so much serving and Mary who just sat at the feet of Jesus listening to what He had to say. Mary, Jesus says, has chosen the better part.

“Looking about at those sitting around Him, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers!” Wow! That is shocking. Jesus calls those who are sitting around Him, those who are following Him, by implication, His disciples... these he calls His true family. It makes sense. We have a natural family and a supernatural family. Who could be more family to Jesus than the family born to His mother and earthly family? Those who follow Him, His disciples are the members of that family!

Jesus offers one last and most helpful clarification of who His new true family is. Verse 35: “For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.” Wow again! There is something in me that wants to be counted in Jesus' family. This calls me to obedience. Jesus doesn't put the highest value on whose family you were born into. He doesn't put the highest value on which church you belong to. He puts the highest value on those who do the will of God – calling them family.

Do you want in to the family of Jesus? Do the will of God. First on the To Do List: recognize Jesus correctly; not how you may have pegged Him in the past, but as He is revealed in the pages of Scripture.

By the definition Jesus Himself gives us in verse 35, are you in the family of Jesus? “Whoever does the will of God, **he** is...”!

How do you find yourself this morning? Are you riding on the coattails of someone who has gone before you, thinking you are in by association? Or are you perhaps riding on the coattails of your own **previous** obedience to Jesus. Beloved, capture the heart of Jesus here, and know that He regards as closest to Him those who do the will of God. Are you doing it? May you enjoy the sweet fellowship of your brother and friend in Jesus. Are you not? Today is a great day to begin again doing the will of God.

This is our memory verse for this week: "For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother." Mark 3:35

Conclusion

So that is our passage. We see in review here that Jesus was not who His family, or His first family of faith thought Him to be. He was neither lunatic, nor demoniac. Who do we see Jesus to be? Well we have already seen Him to be the Son of God, the King of the Kingdom of God, the forgiver of sins, the correct interpreter of Scriptures, the healer of the afflicted, the One with power over the forces of darkness... and here in this passage we see Him to be the family member to those who do the will of God.

Oh how it is my heart that you are counted by Jesus to be His brothers and sisters and mothers. Do you need to do anything today to make your standing in the family of God good?

Maybe there is a step away from a sin you have been indulging in that is not the will of God. Repent and leave it behind today. If you have been playing the prodigal in even the smallest way, wake up and realize that even the servants in your heavenly Father's house are enjoying a much better life and relationship with God. As you turn and walk towards God, He sees and runs towards you. There will be an embrace. God Himself will throw His arms around you and celebrate.

Maybe you have been so obedient for so long under such adverse circumstances that you are growing weary in well doing. Brothers, sisters, mothers, persevere and take joy right now that you are family to Jesus. His love for you reaches to the mountains and I believe right now He wants to reach to the tenderness of your heart. You have a God whose love for you is perfect. He appreciates your faithful doing of His will and He takes pleasure in you. Thus says the Lord, "I love you."

Let's pray.