

Mark 3:19b-30

Mark 3:19 And they went into a house. **20** Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. **21** But when His own people heard *about this*, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind." **22** And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons." **23** So He called them to *Himself* and said to them in parables: "How can Satan cast out Satan? **24** If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. **25** And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. **26** And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. **27** No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house. **28** "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; **29** but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation" - **30** because they said, "He has an unclean spirit." (NKJV)

Since Mark told about Jesus choosing the 12 disciples in verse 19 to the beginning of verse 20, a lot of things have happened. First, Jesus taught the sermon on the mount. So we know very clearly what kind of preaching He was doing at this time. It is really helpful to read that passage beginning in Matthew 5 to gain perspective on what the context is in **our** text.

This preaching is one of the most powerful sermons ever preached. Christ covered how to live and how to think in just a few short chapters. He defied the existing experts by simply teaching the truth in a way that anyone could understand.

Then after the sermon on the mount, Jesus healed a Centurion's servant. Now we often read that story without considering the implications. A Centurion was a representative of all of Rome's might. This man would have represented what people like Simon the Zealot would hate. The Centurion, himself, would be one of the least likely candidates for ministry by any religious big shot.

But Jesus did set his face in that man's direction. Then the Centurion told Christ that Christ did not have to do that. And the Centurion was not worthy of that kind of attention. He told Christ to just say the word and it would be done. So Christ remarked on this man's amazing faith and healed the Centurion's servant.

Christ also made remarks to the effect that a bunch of this kind of people are going to make it into the Kingdom of God, but a bunch of Jews would not.

You can just imagine what the disciples were absorbing from this encounter. The good guys and bad guys were being re-defined for them.

Then we are next told in Luke 7 about Jesus raising a dead widow's son.

After this we are told in Matt 11 and Luke 7 about Jesus replying to John the Baptist. John is clearly losing hope in Christ being the Messiah. So he sends his messengers to ask Christ, "Are you the coming one, or do we look for another?" Jesus was in the middle of healing people. Jesus told the messengers to go back to John and tell him "The blind see and the lame walk; lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Blessed is he who is not offended because of me."

This probably gave great comfort to John, even though John probably expected Christ to respond differently than He did.

Then Christ, in Matt 11 began to rebuke the cities that He did most of his miracles in. He rebukes Chorazin and Bethsaida. He basically told them that if Sodom had seen these works they would have repented from their sin. Essentially Christ is telling them that they are worse than that notoriously wicked city. They would not have imagined such a thing. But Christ said it was true.

Then in Luke 7 we are told about a repentant woman who poured fragrant oil on Christ's feet and washed his feet with her tears. Simon, the religious big shot thought to himself that Christ must not know what kind of woman this is. But the problem was really that Simon didn't know what kind of man **HE** was. So Christ told a parable and asked "who loves the most, the one forgiven of a little or the one forgiven of a lot?" He asked this question to Simon and Simon picked correctly. Then Christ emphasized just how beautiful these acts of love were that were done by this woman, when Simon didn't even show the common courtesy of having Christ's feet washed.

Now that is the context of today's text. Keep in mind that much of this would have been common gossip. So Christ's family would have been hearing bits and pieces of what was going on.

Now let's read another version of today's text from Matt 12

Matt 12:22-37

Matthew 12:22 Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. **23** And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" **24** Now when the Pharisees heard *it* they said, "This *fellow* does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." **25** But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. **26** If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? **27** And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? Therefore they shall be your judges. **28** But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. **29** Or how can one enter a

strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. 30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. 31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come. 33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by *its* fruit. 34 Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (NKJV)

Now let's walk through this text using passages from both Matthew and Mark. First we start with Mark's account where they went into a house. This is more commonly understood as "they went home". So this is probably telling us that they went home to their home base in Capernaum.

And the ministry that Christ was doing was bringing such a crowd that the disciples didn't even have time or opportunity to eat. That must have been very difficult and demanding of them.

Then 21 But when His own people heard *about this*, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."

Now remember that the bigger context tells us that there is more going on than just Christ being very busy. He has been taking on the established religion. He has been condemning whole towns for their unbelief. He is having harlots treat him inappropriately in public. It would be easy to judge Christ at a distance and to judge him based on appearances. It is always easy to do that, isn't it? Oh we so trust how things seem to us. It is so easy to trust our seemers. If something strikes us as being terribly wrong, we assume we must be right to be so indignant. After all, don't I feel strongly about this? Doesn't this seem so wrong? Aren't there so many people who would agree with me?

But look here. That is exactly what is going on with Christ's family. But there is really only one question that needs answered here. Are they right? Is their evaluation true? And in this case, no matter how strongly they felt whatever they felt, no matter how much they thought their evaluation was true, no matter how much they thought the Son of God needed their help and advice and intervention at this point, they were wrong. It didn't matter if there were a million people who

agreed with them on this point. It didn't matter if they all agreed on this point of action. Every one of them was wrong.

Before we get caught up in our hasty evaluations, we need to ask one question.

What does God say? What does God say? If you would have asked most Catholics in Martin Luther's day if what Martin Luther was doing to stand against the Roman church was right, most would have said "No". Some would have said it in the strongest of terms, talking about the horrible things that should be done to Martin Luther. But Luther did not get his marching orders from the crowds or public opinion polls. In fact he didn't care what anyone else thought. All he cared about was what God thought.

There are many issues that Christians have pre-formed opinions about. And most times, they have either never studied the issue or they have never really allowed themselves to believe that they might be wrong about the issue. So they studied the Bible in such a way to prove that the Bible says something whether it says it or not.

We cannot trust those urges and impulses. We must submit them to the Word of God and trust **it**.

It is likely that Christ's family heard a lot of truth about what Christ was doing. But they did not have the spiritual perspective to accurately interpret it. Had they been spending time with Christ, had they been following Him, had they been talking to Christ, they probably would have had a different opinion. But they weren't.

We say this often, but it warrants saying again. In our ministry to one another, we often think we know what the problems are and what the answers are. But we often don't know as much as we think we do. And that is why it is good to start our conversations with questions rather than commands. We will save others a great deal of hurt and ourselves a great deal of embarrassment if we will make that a habit.

21 But when His own people heard *about this*, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."

So "His own people" here are most likely Christ's storge' family. They are His People. Now what gave them the idea that they had rights to tell Christ what to do? I don't know, but that often happens in family. We are often more assuming and bossy than we should be. Just because we know each other well, we think we can replace God in their lives. Sometimes we need to learn our boundaries and stick to them. Certainly Christ could have used help in the situation He was in. But the help was not going to come to Him from this clan with this mindset. They would have done much better to show up and ask Christ how they could help. But they didn't, as we will see further in Mark.

The words for “Lay hold of him” are the same words we looked at before. These are the same words that would be used for someone’s arrest. This is not an “arm around the shoulder” approach. It is a “let’s grab his arms and legs and haul him out of this joint” kind of approach.

And then to say “He is out of His mind”. Think about that. They are essentially, according to their expert and tested opinion, calling the creator of the universe, out of His mind. What pride and ignorance it would take to come up with such a conclusion. But this happens all the time. There are people all over the world who have evaluated God in the same manner. And to them it makes perfect sense. But from a higher perspective, it is difficult to imagine anything that would be dumber. But how about us? Do we think God is crazy? Do we look at what he is doing in our life’s situations and think that God could not possibly know what He is doing? When we say, but I cannot possibly obey God in this situation, aren’t we essentially saying the same thing? Aren’t we saying that God does not know what He is doing to put us in a spot this difficult? Maybe we shouldn’t be so hard on Christ’s family members. If we were there we might have done the same thing. We still might.

It is at this point that the Matthew text kicks in.

A blind, mute demon possessed man was now brought to Christ. Christ healed the man and now he had no demon and could speak and see. Naturally the crowds were impressed. They asked, could this be the son of David? Could this be the Messiah? That is a very good perspective, a very good question. It deserves looking into the answer.

But look at the other evaluation in this text.

We find the scribes who came down from Jerusalem. Here come the guys from the headquarters. These are the company guys. They have an agenda. And it will not be interrupted by truth.

So what is their evaluation? Christ has a devil. They are saying this fellow doesn’t cast out demons from any good or legitimate or Godly source. No. He couldn’t do that. He isn’t one of us. We haven’t endorsed him. In fact, he doesn’t even say anything good about us. So he cannot be good. He must be bad.

There is no exploration of the truth here. There is no consideration of the facts.

There is nothing but the logical extension of an assumption that will not be allowed to be challenged. He is wrong because he cannot possibly be right.

So the scribes, the religious geniuses, are essentially saying, Christ is casting out demons by asking the head of the demons to get rid of his influence in people’s lives.

That would be about as smart as explaining how Germany was defeated in World War 2. It would be like saying that Germany was defeated by Patton convincing Hitler to kill all his soldiers. Yeah. That happens all the time. It is just a stupid

evaluation. But the scribes were desperate. How else could they explain that Christ could do what they could not? And how could they distract from the good things that Christ was doing? The people could see what happened when Christ cast a demon out. And they all knew it was a good thing.

So Jesus knew their thoughts. And He was not about to allow their thoughts, and what they might privately say to the crowd, stand.

23 So He called them to *Himself* and said to them in parables: "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. 27 No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.

Christ calls out the scribes and he will show that their reasoning does not stand. In fact, it isn't even reasoning. It is really propaganda.

Christ says, "How can Satan cast out Satan?"

We only need to think about it a little bit to see the truth Christ is saying.

Any entity will not stand if half the people are trying to do something and the other half are trying to undo the same thing. When we play our little Christmas football game, we have two teams. And each team has its own goal. Every member has the goal of helping their team score touchdowns. Just imagine if half of one of the teams actually had the goal of helping the other team make the most touchdowns. How do you think that would go? Now sometimes if you are watching, you might think this happening. It really isn't. The teams are united on their goals. If not, they will fall apart.

The same is true for the devil's team. It cannot fight against itself and still accomplish the evil goals the devil has for his kingdom. And the devil would never allow such a thing. He is a strong opponent. He is putting on a strong charge. And he would never allow his efforts to be thwarted from within.

There is only one way to defeat his intentions. It is by brute force.

27 No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.

Christ is explaining here that in order to intrude into the devil's house, his kingdom, and plunder his goods, his children, there is only one way to do it. He has to bind the strong man. He must be stronger than the strong man and be able to immobilize him. And then he can accomplish whatever he desires with the strong man's children, his goods.

Christ is basically telling the scribes and everyone listening on, I can cast out demons because I am stronger than the devil. That is the truth. And anyone who knows anything knows this is true.

I think we would do well to think about this. Do we really believe that our Savior is stronger than any evil force that could attack us? Do we believe he can, by sheer force, thwart any attempt of the devil? Well that is what scripture tells us. Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world. No matter what evil efforts or effects you are dealing with this morning, Christ is stronger than the source of any of those evils. We can rest our confidence in Him.

Now let's move on to the next thing Christ says. It is really important to keep our context in mind. Christ is dealing with people who are ascribing His wonderful redeeming actions, His heavenly actions, to the devil. The scribes are saying Christ is with the demons and that is how he is casting out demons.

That is the definition of blasphemy. To blaspheme is to *vilify*; to *speak impiously* defame, rail on, revile, speak evil. Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary. When Christ ascribed Godlike qualities to himself, the religious leaders said he was guilty of blasphemy because they assumed He was not God. And if Christ calls Himself God and He is not God, that is blasphemy. Here the scribes blaspheme by ascribing demonic characteristics to God. It works both ways. Blasphemy is usually used when ascribing Godlike or anti-godlike attributes to the wrong party.

Christ says this:

28 "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; 29 but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"-- 30 because they said, "He has an unclean spirit." (NKJV)

Matthew 12:31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come. (NKJV)

This is often referred to as the unforgivable sin. I have spoken to several people who were very afraid that they had committed this sin, a sin that cannot be forgiven. And without a doubt, there is such a thing. But let's look at it in its context.

The verb tense for blasphemy is Aorist, Active, Subjunctive. I don't know a lot about Greek. Normally **Aorist** is a once and done type of verb. So this leads us to believe it is something that is a position that a person has entered once and for all

time. **Active** means it was of their deciding. And **subjunctive** means it did not have to be so.

Now, look at what is forgivable. Being wrong about Christ is forgivable. Judging Him wrongly is forgivable. Look at what Paul did. He said and did horrible things in his efforts to hurt the cause of Christ. So we can see right off the bat that this is not about some mistake a person makes in a moment of time. It is not mumbling certain words and then having your fate sealed.

The example we have of those who are guilty of this sin are scribes who know full well that Christ is the Messiah. They have seen all the signs.

This is what they themselves said of Christ.

John 11:47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." (NKJV)

And again

Acts 4:15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. (NKJV)

The religious leaders knew what Christ was doing and what power He was doing it through. They just didn't like it. So they would resort to anything to discredit Him. Think about what it would take to do this. One would have to have made war on the Holy Spirit in one's heart. It would require a condition that says, I don't care who God is. I hate Him and will not respond to His call on my life.

It is likely that the unpardonable sin is unpardonable solely because it places a person where he cannot avail upon the only means of salvation. To say that the Spirit of God, the spirit that leads us to Christ, the spirit of truth, is of the devil, we have just cut ourselves off from the only means of having our sins forgiven. And this is no accident a person performs. When a person does this, it is a statement of their entire life position. It is not subject to change.

People who have committed this sin will never sit around pining that maybe they have committed the unpardonable sin. They simply won't care. If you care about your sin, if you want forgiven of your sin, that is a very good evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in your heart. He is calling you to repentance. And if you want to repent, it is only because God has made you ready to repent. It is of Him. Don't concern yourself about a sin that some cannot be forgiven of. Call upon the God who is calling you to Himself and He is sure to forgive you.

Let's look at the first part of this verse again.

28 "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter;

Isn't that just glorious. If we are wanting our sins to be forgiven, this is the verse for us.

In conclusion, there is a lot to learn from in this text. We learn about Christ's family. That is a bad example. We learn about the Scribes. That is a bad example. And we learn more about Christ, always the best example.

I have been a Christian for 44 years. And I have talked to lots of true believers in that time. And one of the qualities that convinces me that they are believers is that the truth is more important than what they think. I have seen people who call themselves believers go off on rages, spouting stuff they either think is true or want it to be true, but it is not. And there is no chance of calmly talking about the scriptures, person to person, to explain your position.

That to me is the most frightening place to be. That is the place these scribes were in. They trusted their own perceptions, their own evaluations, and then they closed their minds to any other possibilities.

We, as believers, can never allow that to happen to us. That attitude is what divides churches. It creates division and destruction. And it displays pride and arrogance. We do well to ask, in every situation, no matter how irritated we are or how angry we are, what is true? What is true about the situation? What is true about God? And what is true about me? We will often find that the lion's share of the problem resides in the question, what is true about me?