

Mark 3:7-35

Date: Sunday, 7 February 2021

Scripture: Mark 3:7-35

Sermon: Who is Jesus to You?

Preacher: Justin Ang

Passage

Mark 3:7 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea 8 and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. 9 And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, 10 for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. 11 And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." 12 And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

Mark 3:13 And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach 15 and have authority to cast out demons. 16 He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); 18 Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Mark 3:20 Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. 21 And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."

Mark 3:22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." 23 And he called them to him 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 will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. 27 But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

Mark 3:28 "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— 30 for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

Mark 3:31 And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. 32 And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." 33 And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

Transcript

Introduction

Who is Jesus to you? That's a pretty important question. And it's one I just want to talk very briefly about today. As I reflect on this passage this week, I was confronted by that question. Who is Jesus to us? When I say Jesus, what do you think of? C.S. Lewis in a radio talk talked about his trilemma about Jesus Christ said this

You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.

Who is Jesus? Josh McDowell author of Evidence that Demands a Verdict says that Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic or Lord. You have to choose. Who is Jesus to you? That is the question that I ask this morning. Who is Jesus to the people in this chapter? Because, as we look at this passage, there's a number of different responses that the people have.

Let's have a look at the different people. The crowd. The disciples. The scribes. His family.

The Crowd

Let's look at the crowd. We see that Jesus' popularity is growing. The people gather from a very great area, "Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon." And it's easy for us to skip over that fact, but his popularity is immense. They all want to see Jesus.

But who is Jesus to them? It seems that they want to follow him, but we're told that they gather to see him because he was healing them. That's not a bad thing, he came to heal. But remember earlier in Mark, we're told that Jesus' primary purpose wasn't to physically heal. It's to preach the kingdom of God. To repent and believe in the gospel. It's a good thing that he healed them. But we know later that many of this crowd they abandon Jesus. When the going got tough, when the pressure comes upon Jesus from Jerusalem, the crowd abandons him.

They don't see him for who he really is. They don't see Jesus as the unclean spirits truly see Jesus, "the Son of God." They only come to him because he heals them. Jesus being the Son of God, the ruler of the world, means that he will heal. But do the crowds follow him?

I wonder, whether we are like the crowds? I wonder whether we come to Jesus because we find ourselves in a difficult situation, a situation that only Jesus can help us. Do we count the cost of following Jesus? CS Lewis, talks about how when he was young, he would often get a toothache. And he would remember that his mother would give him something cold to numb the pain and he found that enjoyable. But over time, he realised that there was another side to telling his mother about the toothache. He realised that the very next morning that they would have to go to the dentist. And that was not a very nice experience. Counting the cost is so important. And I wonder whether we have counted the cost with Jesus. It's not a

bad thing, to go to Jesus. But do we count the cost? Do we realise that not only does Jesus heal us, help us, restore us, but do we realise that he calls us to suffer as we follow him? Sometimes, I hear you talk about the good old days when Christians were the majority. But when I look at us now, where are all the people from the “good old days” at Caringbah? Some may have moved churches, but I suspect many are no longer followers of Christ. Being Christian isn’t easy. We will suffer. Do you count the cost?

The Disciples

But what about the disciples? Who is Jesus to the disciples? We must remember that when we read through the gospels, there’s like concentric circles of relationships. We have the disciples who are always walking with Jesus, then we have the crowd who follows him. And there’s a difference between these two groups, because later on we’ll see that Jesus, whenever he speaks to the crowds, he speaks in parables. But to his disciples, to those who follow him, he actually explains the parables.

And here we’re told that the disciples are given authority to preach, and to cast out demons. For these people to be disciples, they were to follow Jesus. They would spend three years walking with Jesus. Knowing him deeply. Following him and obeying him. If we repent and believe the gospel, this is what he calls us to do. To follow him, just like the disciples. To commit our lives to him wholeheartedly. To follow him, even in death remembering that there is resurrection on the other side.

Are we like that? Do we see ourselves following Jesus? How seriously do we take this call of Jesus to follow him? We saw that when Jesus called Levi the tax collector, what did Levi do? What did James and John, the Sons of Zebedee do as Jesus walks by? They left what they were doing and followed him. I wonder whether we are able to surrender everything to Jesus, like that hymn.

All to Jesus I surrender,

Humbly at His feet I bow,

Worldly pleasures all forsaken;

Take me, Jesus, take me now.

I hope we actually hear these words. Because if you are a Christian, this should be your prayer. To surrender everything to Jesus. But I hope we count the cost! For-sake all worldly pleasures, to bow our feet before him. This should be our prayer.

And I want to ask, what are you struggling to surrender to Jesus? I was recently reflecting on what we can often do in our lives as Christians. It's a bit like the manse. People come over to the manse, and they'll visit us. But there are some parts of the manse that you treat as off limits, you don't come into the bedroom. You don't generally come upstairs without our permission. Sometimes, it seems that we treat Jesus that way. We let Jesus into our lives, we let him into the foyer, the kitchen, the dining room. We enjoy his company. But gradually, he asks us to invite him into different areas of our lives, and we are reluctant. Yes, there are times when we struggle with it, but there are times when we don't want to let him in. There are rooms in our lives that we don't want to surrender to Jesus.

And there's a warning here with the disciples. Do you notice who is among the twelve? Judas Iscariot, the one who eventually betrays Jesus and subsequently Jesus is put to death. He's a warning to us this morning. We need to follow Jesus not just with our lips, but with our actions, with our hearts.

The Scribes

Let's talk about the scribes. Who is Jesus to them? The scribes, we're told, come from Jerusalem. They're here to pick a fight aren't they? And they accuse him of being from Satan. It's really quite sad because their logic is messed up. They're saying that Jesus must be from Satan, but Jesus rightly points out that he's not from Satan because Satan cannot cast out Satan. Jesus rightly points out that he is able to cast out demons because he actually opposes Satan. He is more powerful than Satan.

In this respect, I hope that we aren't like the Scribes. Because it would be a dangerous thing. Jesus actually warns the Scribes, let me show you.

"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." (Mark 3:28-30 ESV)

Maybe you heard David read this passage out and you were confused. Or maybe you were fearful. Have I blasphemed the Holy Spirit? Have I spoken against the Holy Spirit in vain? This is where we need to understand what it means to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Basically, it means to deny who Jesus is. That's what the scribes from Jerusalem were doing. They were denying that Jesus is the Son of God. Instead they were saying that Jesus was of Satan! To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to deny the Holy Spirit's testimony of who Jesus is. That was the problem with the Scribes. The scribes were essentially denying who Jesus is. Now if you trust in Jesus, you repent and believe in him, then you are not blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

But some of you here, perhaps, deny who Jesus is. You don't think that he is Lord, you don't think that he is saviour. In fact, you might say that Jesus is either a liar, or he was just a good moral teacher but he wasn't the Son of God. You might think that he is a lunatic, that he had deluded visions of himself. I would say to you that you are in danger of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, you are denying who Jesus is, and you are in danger of not having your sins forgiven. I don't say that to condemn, I say that as an act of love. It's like if you a disease, but you didn't realise you had it. But then I knew you had a disease. Would you think it's loving if I chose to keep quiet? Especially when I had the solution to your disease? Of course it's not loving. I need to say, here is an opportunity to put your trust in Jesus.

Family

Finally, let's talk about Jesus' family. Because we're told a little about his family here. We're told that his blood family think that he's gone a little crazy. They go to see him. They're looking for him, and it appears that he becomes rude towards them. He denies them, when they're seeking after him and he says this, have a look.

And his 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." (Mark 3:31-35 ESV)

But Jesus is making a specific point isn't he? He's saying that to be part of the family of God, to be part of the kingdom of God, being part of Jesus' family, that's the most important. What's most important in our lives, is the fact that we are part of the family of God because we are ones who do the will of God. God doesn't count titles, he doesn't look at me and say, "oh Justin is a reverend, that counts for something." He doesn't look at you and say, "oh you are (something) that counts for something. He doesn't look at the scribes and go, wow they're scribes. No, it's not your status. It's not anything. What is of utmost importance is whether you are doing the will of God. You could be the greatest preacher, and yet, if you don't do the will of God, then he will say to you on that last day, I never knew you.

So what is the will of God? We're told in Mark 1.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15 ESV)

The will of God is to repent and believe the gospel. It's that simple. It's turning away from our old evil ways, and turning to Jesus. Believing the good news, that Jesus came into this world to save sinners like you and me. That Jesus Christ, God's only begotten son, came to this world to give us eternal life. It means, loving him with all your heart soul, mind and strength. It means loving others as yourself. It's learning to be obedient to Jesus. It's learning to be obedient to Jesus over a lifetime. I know, that this church prays a lot. It means giving glory to God in all that you do, each and every day. To be part of the family of God is to repent and believe in the gospel. That's what doing his will is. John Piper says this

Deep and sweet family affections are forged in the shared pursuit with Christ of sacrificial obedience to our Father.

Let me ask, who is Jesus to you? Do you accept him as your Lord and saviour? Are you growing in your love and appreciation for what Jesus Christ did for you? Are you growing in your appreciation for Jesus' love for you? Are you repenting of your sins? Are you believing the good news of Jesus Christ? Is He your greatest treasure? My prayer is that each of us here can answer yes to all these questions.

Let's pray.