

LIAR, LUNATIC OR LORD

Mark 3:20-35

Introduction:

Have you ever been misunderstood? Have you ever been misrepresented? Has anyone ever taken your words and motives and twisted them around and used them against you? If you live long enough in this world you are going to face that kind of a personal attack.

In our text today, we are going to see that even Jesus, the sinless Son of God, was misunderstood and maligned. The interesting and revealing thing is that it was not only his enemies who misunderstood and attacked him, but even his friends and family accused and maligned him.

C.S. Lewis, a brilliant thinker, a great theologian of the 20th century, came up with an interesting approach to the question of who Jesus was. It is something you have probably heard. It came out of a concern about what many people were saying about Jesus. It concerned Lewis that people were denying the deity of Jesus Christ, yet saying that he was a good man, a great teacher, or a wonderful example.

His argument was that the idea of Jesus simply being a good man was not an option. He didn't leave us with that possibility. He pointed out that Jesus clearly claimed to be God. And as soon as He declared that He was God the Son, that He had the same nature as God, as soon as He said if you have seen Me, you've seen God, it was no longer possible, said C.S. Lewis to simply designate Him as a good teacher. That is not open as an option.

Lewis then said, and you may have heard this before: *"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would*

be the Devil of Hell. 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. He did not intend to."

(That is taken from his book, "Mere Christianity.")

This morning, as we look at our text – Mark 3:20-35, we will see this question played out in the lives of the people surrounding Jesus when he was here on earth. We see Jesus under attack by two groups of people. One group thought he was crazy—a lunatic. The other thought he was a deceiver—a liar. But He calls us to believe that He is indeed the Saviour and Master—the Lord.

His Sanity Under Attack by His Family and Friends

Read vv. 20-21 – a couple of important things:

Home – was this Capernaum or Nazareth? Not clear – see 2:1

The crowds – the popularity of Jesus at this time. It doesn't mean the people understood him or that they had a grasp on what He expected from them. But they followed – attracted by the miracles. It was almost a mob mentality – everybody wanted to be in on what was happening.

His family (friends) – the wording in the Greek suggests those close to him. KJV – friends; most newer translations – family; NKJV – his own people. It seems apparent that the primary reference is to his family. Look down to v. 31ff – his mother and brothers are trying to reach him.

Now, **the situation** – "...when his family heard it..." What did they hear? What was it that troubled them?

- He claims to be God – **Mark 2:5**
- He draws such vast crowds that there is a danger of His being trampled and crushed by the crowds – **Mark 3:9**. He even had a boat standing by in case He needed to escape the press of the crowds.
- He calls men to follow Him around the country to preach the Word – **Mark 3:13-18**
- He refuses to rest and take care of Himself – **Mark 3:20**

His family misunderstood Him. They didn't understand his ministry. We are told in John 7:5 that his brothers did not believe in him. You see, they think he's nuts. They're convinced he's completely lost it. They are saying, "He is out of his mind..." – he's beside himself, insane. And what do they plan to do?

"...they went out to seize him..." They are planning an intervention. They are going to take him by force and get him someplace where they can get him straightened out.

It is interesting that there are people like that today. Think back to when you came to understand your sinful condition and you put your faith in Christ for salvation. Was there anyone among your family or friends who thought you were crazy? Did anyone say things to you like, "This is just a phase you're going through. You'll get over it."

There have always been and always will be people who will criticize you for living for Jesus. They will call you a fanatic and perhaps much worse. They will think you have lost your mind to go after that 'religious stuff.'

Don't let that worry you. They used to call the great evangelist, D. L. Moody "Crazy Moody" because he was so on fire for the Lord. In Acts 26:24, Festus, the procurator of Judea, said to the Apostle Paul, "You are out of your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you insane."

Don't be surprised when even friends and family do not understand your relationship with Christ. They may even think you to have lost your mind. This was the situation Jesus faced. Oh, later, His brothers came to believe and became tremendous servants of the gospel. But, now they were convinced that Jesus was a lunatic.

His Spirituality Under Attack by His Enemies

While His family are on the outside trying to get in to stage an intervention to save Jesus from Himself, the scribes are on the inside listening to Jesus and watching Him work. These men do not attack His sanity; they attack His spirituality.

Notice that these scribes have come all the way from Jerusalem, and they are troubled by Jesus.

The attack – Jesus has been confronted over and over by the scribes and the Pharisees, both in the regions around Jerusalem and in Galilee. They have seen what he is doing and this is their conclusion. This is their verdict. They are saying that he is demon-possessed. Beelzebul – comes from the pagan god, Baal, but had become a name for Satan. They are saying that Jesus is possessed by a demon and is casting out demons by the power of Satan.

Why would they say that? Why don't they just conclude that he is insane? Well, they have seen and heard about the miracles. The ministry of Jesus was filled with supernatural activity. Insanity simply doesn't explain the supernatural. Lunatics may do weird stuff but they can't do what Jesus was doing – casting out demons, healing the sick and diseased, power over the wind and water. It either had to be the power of God or the power of Satan.

They were unwilling to acknowledge that it was the power of God, because then they would have to accept his teaching and believe in him. They would not do that so... their mantra was, it was Satanic.

The answer – Jesus response is three fold:

1. The absurdity of a divided kingdom or house – vv. 24-25
2. The incongruity that Satan would jeopardize himself by attacking his own kingdom – v. 26. Satan is out to destroy the work of God. He is not going to divide and destroy his own work.
3. The illustration – v. 27. Jesus says that you cannot rob a well defended home unless you first tie up the strong man – the defender of that home. The illustration is clear, Satan is the strong man – he defends his kingdom, but Jesus had the power to invade Satan's kingdom and deliver whomsoever he desires from the devil's grip. Jesus has power over the devil!

The warning – the unforgivable sin

We need to just look briefly at vv. 28-30 – *read them*. According to Jesus, these religious leaders have no idea of the spiritual danger they are in. They have looked at Jesus and at his work and ministry and have concluded that He is demon-possessed. They have called him the servant of the devil, working by the power of Satan.

As we consider this disturbing passage of Scripture, I want to break it down carefully but quickly. First notice that Jesus is very clear about the power and availability of forgiveness.

“Truly, I say to you...” When Jesus says this, he is indicating that this is an important statement, listen carefully.

“...all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter...” That is an amazing and comforting truth. There is forgiveness, no matter what you have done. I have seen people broken and desperate because of the things they have done and the most wonderful thing is to be able to tell them, you can be forgiven...

“but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin...” That is a terrifying statement. But I think the key to understanding what Jesus is saying is in the little explanation that Mark adds in v. 30 – “for they had said, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’”

You see this warning was to these religious leaders. They saw Jesus in person. They saw the miracles. Jesus was healing the sick, casting out demons, preaching the Word of God, all in the power of the Holy Spirit. They had seen all of that, but instead of recognizing the work of the Holy Spirit, they attributed it to Satan. They blasphemed the Holy Spirit, by attributing His work to Satan. And Jesus said they were in grave danger of committing a sin which would be unforgiveable.

So, the question is this: is it possible to commit this unpardonable sin today? I don't think so. I have heard people who were concerned that they had committed the unpardonable sin – that perhaps there was no hope for them.

Quote – *“This sin could only have been committed by people living in those days when Jesus walked the earth. This sin could only be committed by people who looked into His eyes, saw His miracles, heard His words, experienced His love and grace in action, and said that He was of the devil.”* – Alan Carr

However – and this is important. It is still possible to go to eternity unforgiven. The only sin that is unforgiveable today is the sin of steadfastly refusing to believe in Jesus Christ. Throughout your life, the Holy

Spirit will come to you to urge you to repent and receive Jesus Christ as Saviour. If you continue to refuse and reject His pleading, eventually it will be the last time, and there will be no more possibility of forgiveness and you will die in your sin. The only unforgivable sin in this day is saying “**no**” to the call of the Holy Spirit for the last time. The result will be eternal damnation.

Conclusion

Well, we need to wrap this up. Do you find yourself under attack? Do friends or family misunderstand you because of your faith in Christ? Do they think you are crazy or fanatical about your beliefs? You are not alone. They thought Jesus was a lunatic. Others even accused him of being demon-possessed.

Paul said in Philippians 1:29 – *“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,”*

In Acts 5, after being arrested and threatened for proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ, on their release, we read that the apostles *“...left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.”* (Acts 5:41)

Maybe you are here this morning and have never confessed your sin and received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Is the Holy Spirit calling you today? Don't ignore it. You never know when it will be the last time. Respond to him today.