

²⁰ Jesus entered a house. A crowd gathered again so that it was impossible for him and his followers even to eat. ²¹ When his family heard what was happening, they came to take control of him. They were saying, “He’s out of his mind!”

²² The legal experts came down from Jerusalem. Over and over they charged, “He’s possessed by Beelzebul. He throws out demons with the authority of the ruler of demons.”

²³ When Jesus called them together he spoke to them in a parable: “How can Satan throw Satan out? ²⁴ A kingdom involved in civil war will collapse. ²⁵ And a house torn apart by divisions will collapse. ²⁶ If Satan rebels against himself and is divided, then he can’t endure. He’s done for.

²⁷ No one gets into the house of a strong person and steals anything without first tying up the strong person. Only then can the house be burglarized. ²⁸ I assure you that human beings will be forgiven for everything, for all sins and insults of every kind. ²⁹ But whoever insults the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. That person is guilty of a sin with consequences that last forever.”

³⁰ He said this because the legal experts were saying, “He’s possessed by an evil spirit.”

³¹ His mother and brothers arrived. They stood outside and sent word to him, calling for him. ³² A crowd was seated around him, and those sent to him said, “Look, your mother, brothers, and sisters are outside looking for you.”

³³ He replied, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”



Recently I went to Mini Indy. It is kids racing cars. Some of them are as young as 5 years old. These little kids were driving in circles racing each other. I was not doing very well because the cars can flip over and they do quite often. A car bumps a concrete wall and you can be injured so badly. I was with whole family. I saw Wesley, Ella, Emma and Andrew all being entertained and loving it. I turned to Wesley and said: "Wesley, you do not like it" Guess, what Wesley said: "I do like it" My heart was beating fast and as a mother I tried to convinced him that he does not want to drive a race car. I used all the techniques available to mothers. Isn't it unfortunate that so many times we choose what we want for our kids? We manipulate. We pressure. We want kids to want what we want.

Today's lesson from the Holy Scriptures talks about family as well as many other topics. It is not a long narrative, but there is a lot happening and it can look complicated. I think it is worth mentioning that the story is made as a sandwich. What do I mean by it? Let's look:

verse 20 Crowd

verse 21 Family

verse 22 Scribes (Jesus is casting out demons by the ruler of the demons)

verses 23-27 The parables of Satan's end

verses 28-30 Scribes guilty of unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (because they have said that Jesus has an unclean spirit)

verse 31f Family

verse 32f Crowd

We see that on the top and the bottom is crowd and family. So it is wrapped in these two topics. Verse 20: "Jesus entered a house. A crowd gathered again so that it was impossible for him and his followers even to eat".

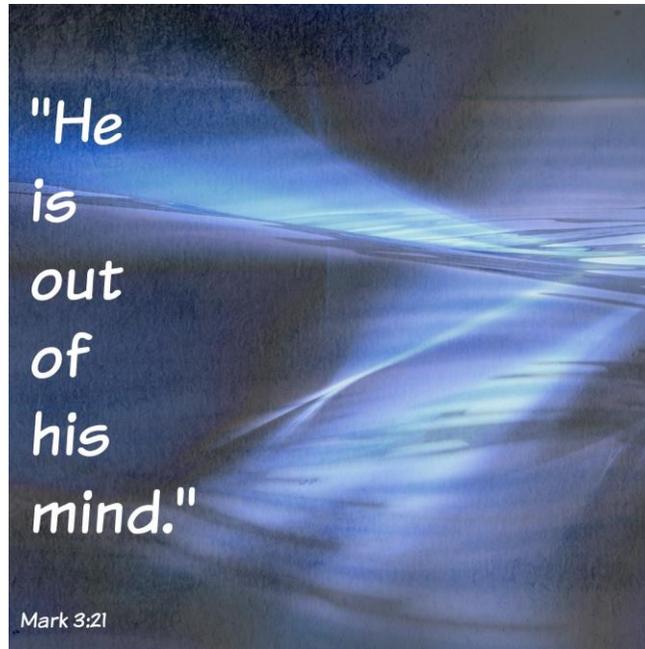
Most of us know that there are occasions like this in our lives. You encounter situations where simply do not have time to eat. The suffocating demands and the dire needs around you are so big that you do not have time or space to eat.

In 1970 a musical was written called "Jesus Christ, Superstar." The lyrics repeatedly ask the question, "Jesus Christ, superstar, who are you? Do you think you are what they say you are?"

That is really the ultimate question for all us, "Who is this Jesus?" Remember that these people in this Gospel account had not yet witnessed the resurrection and the power to the Holy Spirit. They were trying to figure out who Jesus was.

The crowds thought he was Elijah or John the Baptist brought back to life or one of the prophets. His family thought He was their son/brother who had gone crazy. The scribes thought he was possessed by Satan. The only ones who knew were the demons and they were scared. They would fall down in front of him in fear shouting "You are the Son of God."

The next verse says, "When his family heard what was happening, they came to take control of him. They were saying, "He's out of his mind!"



Wow! So Jesus' own family says that he is out of his mind. And then they come to take charge of him – to control him. They want to stop him. Everything is getting out of hand. Of course, they have heard what Jesus was doing: Casting demons, healing, speaking with authority and power. Of course, they have heard that the legal experts are is trying to stop him and to kill him. The family thinks they can fix Jesus.

How difficult it is for us even today to recognize Jesus. Even after all the happens with the Christmas story his own family could not see him as God who became human. They see him as a deranged son and brother embarrassing and humiliating the good family name and likely will get them in trouble with the authorities. He needed to be taken home.

Could it possibly be that we Christians, who have been adopted into the family of God, want to take control of Jesus. Other translations use the word restrain or take custody. Are we willing to allow Jesus to take control of us in every situation individually and collectively or do we seek to control Him?

I told Wesley: "You do not understand. I know better. You do not want to race cars. In Lithuania, members of my youth would lie to their parents about coming to United Methodist church. Their parents would forbid them. What do you do as a pastor? Let them to lie or lose them and the opportunity for them to know Christ?"

In our Bible study we heard the story. When the mother of that follower was not so happy about her son, because he had too much in faith and was too religious. He was much too serious about giving and serving. She was not happy because he was not a fan but a believer. She was not happy because he was not a moderate but devoted follower.



What does it mean to **blaspheme the Holy Spirit?**

This world needs more crazy disciples who imitate Jesus. What can be more crazy than turning the other cheek, blessing those who persecute you, offering forgiveness, or reaching out in love to those who have no ability to pay you back. What is more illogical than to have joy unspeakable, faith unsinkable, love unstoppable and hope eternal in this world of so many trials and tribulations?

Are we crazy enough to believe that God is real and that Jesus lives? Are we irrational enough to follow the radical way of the Gospel? Are we so insane that we think the love of God is greater than all the powers of the evil and death and even Satan?

Do we dare to imagine that the cross is the way to life?

Jesus went too far. His own family thinks he is insane and out of his mind. He has gone off the deep end.

Even worse than that, the legal experts said, "He's possessed by Beelzebul. He throws out demons with the authority of the ruler of demons". The word "Beelzebub" means "Lord of the Flies that swarm around manure." It was another name for Satan in those days. What they are really saying is that Satan is in Jesus. They concluded that Satan is the highest power and that it is how demons flee out of possessed people. He throws out demons with the authority of the ruler of demons.

Now who are the crazy people? It looks like Jesus was the only one with clear thinking. On this side of Easter, we know that He is indeed the only one who sees and understands all things.

Jesus spoke up. He said it is not even logical what are you saying. "A house torn apart by divisions will collapse. If Satan rebels against himself and is divided, then he can't endure".

What Jesus says in the next verse sounds like we all need to pay attention: I assure you that human beings will be forgiven for everything, for all sins and insults of every kind. But whoever insults the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. That person is guilty of a sin with consequences that last forever."

In my young age, when I was diving into faith, I heard that verse and it scared me to death. I was certain I have committed that sin. I asked every pastor I met, from every denomination I could find, to tell me what kind of sin is it. How can you insult the Holy Spirit? I got many different answers but none of them really gave me peace.

I was especially tormented in one particular event. It was at a youth camp. Lots of things needed to be done. Some people were not as motivated and were not hard workers. They were just camping. I lost patience and said, "Get to work. Don't expect that Holy Spirit will do all the things for you." It was 18 years ago. I thought I had insulted Holy Spirit.

Great theologians have wrestled with this verse through the centuries. Augustine concluded that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is un-repentance. It is the persistent rejection of Jesus as the Son of God and as the savior and lord. As long as the rejection continues the condemnation continues.

Jesus speaks and acts against demons by the power of the Holy Spirit. To give Satan the glory is blasphemy. To say Jesus power and authority come from the Devil is blasphemy.

John Calvin said that we commit the unforgiveable sin "only when we knowingly endeavor to extinguish the Spirit."

Matthew Henry wrote that if we are worried that we have committed this sin then we probably have not.

The scribes condemned themselves because their hearts and minds were closed to Jesus, the only source of eternal salvation

I have peace now because I am certain, if we look carefully at the text, insulting or blaspheming the Holy Spirit is when we see Jesus doing miracles and we claim that it is evil. It is giving Satan credit for what the Lord is doing in your life or the life of anyone else.

I was wrong to say what I said but it was not an unforgivable sin. I think we need to know and be aware to praise Jesus, God and Holy Spirit. Acknowledge and give praise to the Triune God. When we pray in Jesus name and get healed, we know that it is God who healed. We know that the highest power is Jesus. We know that Satan is real but he has no victory. Sickness, bondage, demon possessions are cast away. The blind sees and the deaf hears. The dead are raised from death because Jesus, the Lord of life has the victory.

The story comes back to the other side of the sandwich – back to his mother and his siblings. They are outside and sending him word.

“Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”



It could sound very mean and cold-hearted. How could Jesus say that? Here Mark is very mild. Notice that Mark did not say “Those outside are not my mother and brothers.” What Jesus said is you are also my family. You are my brothers and sisters. You are as important as my family that I grew up with. The family of faith is as important as your blood relatives.

Elsewhere we hear Jesus using very strong language:

"I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother."

"Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, can't be my disciple."

"I'll follow you," the man said, "but first let me go give a decent burial for my father who just died." "Let the dead bury the dead!" replied Jesus. "Follow me and let somebody else do the funeral!"

Nothing is more important than obedience to His Heavenly Father.

It depends on what kind of family you have and where they are if this is good news or bad news to you. For me it is awesome news. I always feel the importance of you who are my family of believers.

On the other hand, if you have a close-knit family, it might not be such good news, because you are obligated to take care of other people who are not so nice and make you uncomfortable. You now have to call them brother and sister.

Jesus is saying you are my family. Believers around you are your family. The church is a family. I feel how much your care for each other. I want all of you to encourage and expand your circle.

What are some new ways we can truly be brothers and sisters to each other helping each other to do the will of God?