

From Satan's House To The Father's House

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[0 : 00] Please be at ease if the little one cries.

I've made people fall asleep when I've been preaching, so it wouldn't be strange to make people cry.! Mark chapter 3, we're continuing our study in Mark, Mark's gospel.

And this morning we're in Mark 3, verse 20 to 35. And so there is a section which Mark brackets with something at the start and something at the end, and then something in the middle. It's called a Mark sandwich.

There are three things. There's something in the middle and there's the bread on the outside. Mark chapter 3, from verse 20. And this is just following him appointing the twelve apostles.

And just after that account it says this. Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him.

[1 : 18] For they were saying, he is out of his mind. 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. And he called them to him, and he said to them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.

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.

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.

[2 : 30] For they were saying, he has an unclean spirit. 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 him, 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.

Amen. God, please open our eyes and our minds and our hearts to your word, and open your word to us. In Jesus' name, Amen. I remembered this video that was going about YouTube.

I thought it was a few years ago. And it was actually 18 years, 2007. I was like, wow, where has time gone? Can you remember 2007? Seems like an age ago.

[3 : 35] In 2007, there was a brief and very sad trend on YouTube called the Blasphemy Challenge.

I don't know if you've ever seen it or heard of it. But it was a thing that an atheist group had set up and issued called the Blasphemy Challenge, where they challenged other people, other atheists, to record a video of themselves committing the unforgivable sin.

This bit in Mark chapter 3. And the instructions were simple. You may damn yourself to hell however you would like, but somewhere in your video you must say the phrase, I deny the Holy Spirit.

And there was plenty of people who took up this challenge. Even some well-known people took up this challenge. But you see, these attempts to commit the unforgivable sin were actually not doing what we see in Mark chapter 3.

And these rational thinkers, as rational as they are, completely missed the context of what Mark is getting at and what Jesus was saying. One of the things that we see in this passage is a variety of groups who completely misunderstand Jesus.

[4 : 50] And so it's ironic but not surprising that atheists claiming to be rational in this challenge would misunderstand Jesus too. Now maybe you're thinking to yourself, I don't know if I quite understand what Jesus is getting at here.

And if you don't, that's okay. Because this passage shows that a whole bunch of people misunderstand Jesus. It's one of the big points that Mark is making here. Why does Jesus do what he does?

And who can understand it? Who can understand what Jesus is doing here? So let's look at these three scenes in this passage where people are saying certain things because they don't understand why Jesus is doing what he's doing.

And I've got some headings that we'll be putting up in the screen just now. And so, first question you'll see up on the screen, is Jesus out of his mind?

His family come and they say, they try and seize him because they are saying he's out of his mind. He's out of his mind. After Jesus has chosen his 12 apostles to be with him, they went to base camp.

[5 : 59] And a crowd gathered such that Jesus and his disciples were not even able to eat food together. They weren't able to get any peace. As it says from verse 20, the crowd gathered again so that they could not even eat.

And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him for they were saying he's out of his mind. It seems to have something to do with Jesus not being able to have food with his disciples.

It's not just that the crowd won't let him be, it's that Jesus keeps attending to him. Now imagine his family who knew Jesus all his life for 30 years would be thinking about Jesus and wondering to themselves, isn't it about time you take a day off, Jesus?

I mean, you can't even get some food. Why do you give these people the pleasure of your company when you can't even eat?

Perhaps the lack of rest and the lack of food has affected his mind, thinks his family. He isn't thinking straight. Look at him. Maybe he's letting all this popularity get to his head.

[7 : 10] Maybe he's getting so spiritually minded that he's no earthly use. Come on, Jesus. Take a break. Take a day off.

Tell these people to go away. Now it should be noted that they were trying to seize him, not to harm him. They have good intentions. They're trying to help him because they suppose that he isn't thinking straight.

But they don't see what Jesus sees. They don't see what he sees. They don't understand why he's doing what he's doing. And this same thing happened to others. Like Paul in Acts chapter 26, when he was before Festus.

And Festus said, Paul, come on, man. You're out of your mind. Your great learning is driving you out of your mind. The same thing was said of Martin Luther because of his intense struggles and his strong convictions.

I wonder if, in your pursuit of Christ, anyone in your family has ever thought, you're out of your mind. You're not thinking straight. All your study and your learning and your intense devotion has driven you mad.

[8 : 23] So the first group, they misunderstand Jesus, but at least they've got good intentions at heart. They're saying he's out of his mind, perhaps because they don't get why he is so intensely committed to this ministry.

They cannot see what he sees. However, the second group are saying is that Jesus is possessed by Satan. And so the next question is, is Jesus possessed by Satan?

Scribes from Jerusalem come down, leaders, Pharisees, and they do not have good intentions with what they say. They are trying to harm Jesus. They're trying to defame him.

And out of darkness and desperation, in envy, they say that Jesus is possessed by the devil. They're trying to convince others to stay away from Jesus by saying that the power that Jesus has is from Satan.

This power that Jesus has got is from the pit of hell. That's what they're saying. Now, it should be noted here that there are no attempts to explain away his miracles as simply parlor tricks or magic or mischief or lies or legend.

[9 : 37] Nobody is trying to say that he doesn't do miraculous things. And so there is this admission they concede that Jesus indeed does have great power.

That's why the great crowds are following him and harassing him because he does do powerful miracles. And so there's no option to say that Jesus is just a good teacher, a nice guy, a regular rabbi, some moral teacher or something like that.

There's no option for that. Jesus is displaying a very unique supernatural power. And while others might be astonished and baffled, the scribes from Jerusalem, knowing that they cannot deny his supernatural power, they try to explain it in a way that makes Jesus look evil.

And so they don't want to concede that Jesus is from God. They don't want to say that his power is from God.

And given that he's shown a greater authority than these previously powerful demons, there's only one more option. If Jesus' power is not from God, yet the demons obey him, then he must be in league with the ruler of demons.

[10 : 51] He must be possessed by Satan, the prince of demons. Now these scribes are not stupid. Think about it.

These religious leaders are from Jerusalem, the heart of the nation, the heart of the learned. They're not randomly responding to things off the cuff.

They're already plotting. They're already planning. They're already discussing ways to trap Jesus and his words. They're trying to publicly expose him. They're holding councils to come up with ideas and questions and comments.

They held councils to think about things like this to say against Jesus so that people wouldn't follow him. Now, I want you to imagine that you were there in the first century and that you were seeing all of this.

Even if you were an atheist, if you were in the first century, these things that you would see and experience would be evident and undeniable to those who witnessed it.

[11 : 54] So, a few things that would be evident and undeniable. Firstly, there were people who were genuinely affected and controlled by a superior and evil power.

I think, unlike anything the world sees today, I think that when Jesus came into the world, he completely changed the landscape of the world that from that point on you would never again see the kind of demon possession that he saw in that day because in that time prior to Jesus, the devil had the upper hand against humans.

He had control and so there were people who were genuinely affected and controlled. They were physically and visibly under the influence of a supernatural being with superhuman power and with an evil intent that did these people harm and did other people harm through them.

Secondly, there were also men in the religious establishment who would occasionally try to cast these demons out. They would use incantations and spells and things to try and cast these demons out.

Jesus said this in Matthew and Luke's account of this when they say that he is possessed by Satan and by the power of Satan he casts out demons.

[13 : 15] Jesus says, well, by whom do your sons cast them out? He's saying to them if your own people try and cast these demons out, do they appeal to Satan or do they appeal to God?

And yet even so, all these people who tried to cast demons out were largely unsuccessful. So, not only was it evident that evil spirits existed, but their own attempts to deal with them were unsuccessful.

And so, in this time when Jesus turns up, the evil spirits had the upper hand against humans. Even the most pious of humans didn't have power over these demons.

And then comes Jesus, a man who's able to command these evil spirits and bring people back into their right minds. And what was remarkable was these evil spirits who could dominate other humans were not only unable to dominate this man, Jesus, but they knew who he was.

And they cried out, you're the son of God. And they were terrified of him and they did whatever he commanded. It was remarkable. Nobody had seen this kind of power before.

[14 : 28] And so, you can see why these Jerusalem scribes argued in this way. If he had real power and they didn't want to attribute it to God, then his power must be greater than the demons if he's able to command them.

And so, they think, well, there's only one other option. He must be possessed by Satan himself, the ruler of demons. However, where their statement is illogical is that tactically it doesn't work for a kingdom or a house to be divided against itself.

Or for a ruler to work against himself and divide his own army against itself. It doesn't work. It doesn't make sense tactically, but it also doesn't make sense of what's going on.

Ask yourself this, right? If you were standing there and you were wondering, what is this power that Jesus has and why is he doing what he's doing and who is this man?

And one of the Pharisees said, he is casting out demons by the power of Satan. Ask yourself this question. Does what Jesus is doing look like the work of Satan?

[15 : 38] Is that the kind of thing Satan would do? To heal people and bring them back into their own right mind and care for them and take away the harm and violence that caused them and others?

How can Jesus be mad if he's the one bringing people out of madness into their right minds? How can Jesus be possessed by Satan if what he is doing is bringing people out of darkness and into light?

Turning people away from chaos, violence and evil? How on earth can anyone think that that looks like the work of the devil? So what they are saying is not simply a misunderstanding trying to figure out where this greater power comes from.

What they are saying is incredibly blasphemous. Incredibly blasphemous. This is what the blasphemy challenge didn't get about what Jesus is saying here.

They were witnesses of the power of God doing great good and they are calling it the power and work of evil. To call evil good and good evil is a sign that their hearts have become utterly darkened and hardened beyond repair.

[16 : 48] And so that's what's so serious about this sin. What does it mean to blaspheme the Holy Spirit? Well it's not simply to post a video saying I deny the Holy Spirit.

He doesn't exist. That's not what Jesus is talking about here. Think about this. What is blasphemy? Blasphemy means to slander or defame or to speak evil of something good and holy.

To reverse spiritual and moral values in a slanderous way. And so the key to understanding what blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is is simply to read the text in context.

You see Mark lays it right out in front of us. Verse 29 and verse 30 two spirits are mentioned. Look at verse 29. Whoever blasphemes against which spirit is he talking about?

The Holy Spirit. And in verse 30 for they were saying he has a an unclean spirit. And so they are calling the Holy Spirit an unclean spirit.

[17 : 58] That's what blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is. And it's not simply just to do that willy nilly. They witnessed first hand the power of the Holy Spirit in front of them.

Jesus speaks about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. And then Mark says for they were saying and he tells us the answer. Mark is telling us that Jesus said all of this because of what they were saying.

Unlike Jesus' relatives at the start of the passage who said that Jesus was out of his mind because they didn't understand why he was doing what he's doing. These religious leaders have gone too far.

Mark tells us what blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is by telling us how these people were blaspheming the Holy Spirit by what they were saying. The foolish thing about the blasphemy challenge in 2007 is that not only did they misunderstand what it is to do that but they also are no, we are not 2,000 years, we are not in the unique time and place in which this thing happened.

If they had just read the whole text and context, maybe they would have even used the words that these religious leaders used but still it would not be the same thing because the point in the Gospels is that these religious leaders had a front row seat to be eyewitnesses of the power of the Holy Spirit and Jesus to do such visible and powerful miracles.

[19 : 30] They saw first hand the power of the Holy Spirit in a very unique way that nobody else on earth will ever see and yet they attribute it to Satan.

And Mark's already told us by what spirit Jesus is doing these things, hasn't he? Because in Mark chapter 1, who is it at the baptism of Jesus that descends on him and rests on him and fills him?

It's the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit drives him into the wilderness for what reason? To confront Satan. And so Jesus being the Christ is the one who Isaiah speaks of on whom the Spirit of God rests.

just as God's chosen kings of the past like King David were uniquely filled with the Holy Spirit, so would the son of David, the Christ, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And so to show this even more, to connect the dots in Matthew's account of this blasphemy, Jesus actually quotes Isaiah speaking of the chosen servant on whom God will put his spirit upon and then Jesus casts out a demon and then people start saying, can this be the son of David?

[20 : 43] And so when Jesus was casting out demons, even the average Jew could connect the dots from Isaiah and from the son of David to see that the Christ would be filled with the Holy Spirit and they wondered if Jesus was the Christ.

Yet the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem, they were the top experts in the scriptures in Israel. They would rather say that God's chosen servant is possessed by Satan than filled with God's Spirit.

Do you see how blasphemous that is? Jesus is not doing things in secret. He's publicly demonstrating that he is the chosen servant in Isaiah who is filled with God's Spirit.

And yet they would rather say that the chosen servant, the Christ, the Messiah, is possessed by Satan than filled with God's Spirit. So blasphemous.

Jesus has shown all the signs that he's the Christ. And if he is the Christ, he's uniquely filled with God's Spirit resting upon him. And so the horribly offensive, slanderous, and completely false thing that they do is they call the most Holy Spirit an unclean spirit.

[21 : 55] Even Beelzebul, the prince of demons. To see first-hand the power and work of the Holy Spirit and call it the power and work of Satan is the worst of all blasphemies.

It is to take the most holy thing and call it the most unholy thing. To call the greatest power of good the vilest form of evil. How blasphemous is that?

Do you see how bad it is? Even the average Jew could look at what Jesus was doing and see that he could be the Christ. Yet not just any scribe or Pharisee, but the ones from the heart of the nation, from Jerusalem, the experts in the scriptures, leaders of Israel, they are doing what even demons dare not to do.

Do you see that? Even demons dare not to do this. Even demons cry out the truth when they come face to face with Jesus. What are you to have to do with us?

We know who you are. You're the Holy One of God. You're the Son of God. Have you come to destroy us? Even the demons don't dare to do something like this. And yet the leaders of Israel utter such blasphemies to call the Most Holy Spirit the Most Unholy Spirit.

[23 : 13] So, Jesus said that people may say things against the Son and they will be forgiven, but speaking such blasphemy against the Spirit will never be forgiven.

And so, there's a great encouragement and a great warning. it might sound surprising coming from the lips of Jesus for him to say something like there is something that people will never be forgiven for.

Given that he's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, isn't he all about forgiveness? Well, the incredible thing here is that any sin would be forgiven.

It's the thing that we sometimes forget. Jesus says that all sin will be forgiven the children of man and even the blasphemies that they utter will be forgiven.

All sin. All these things. Incredible thing here is that any sin would be forgiven. Especially blasphemies against Jesus.

[24 : 21] The one who would give his life to forgive such blasphemy. What a very great encouragement. What sin? What sin have you committed that he cannot forgive?

There is hope for you sinner. What is beyond his grace for those who come to him? If you want forgiveness, you will find it. If you want it, you will find it.

Only in Christ. And even if you've spoken against him, even if you've spoken against Christ, he will forgive you just like he has forgiven me when I spoke against Christ, he will forgive you.

Any sin. All sin for those who come to Christ. For those in this passage, notice that we see Mark bracketing this with other people who misunderstand Jesus.

Jesus is out of his mind. He will forgive that. He'll forgive it. You can say that he's out of his mind and there's still hope that one day you might understand and come to Jesus.

[25 : 21] Jesus is saying that many people are going to misunderstand him. At this point in his earthly ministry, he's saying many people are going to misunderstand me and say things about me, but they can be forgiven.

They can be forgiven. Perhaps after his death and resurrection, perhaps the time will come when the spirit convicts them and they believe, just like when Peter in Acts chapter 2 said, God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ.

That's Jesus whom you crucified. And his fellow Jews were cut to the heart and they said, what shall we do? And Peter says, don't worry, it's not too late. Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

There was hope for them, even although they in effect crucified the Son. But the reason there would be no forgiveness for the ones who blaspheme the Holy Spirit is because they had a unique opportunity and time and space to witness something few people will ever witness.

Seeing firsthand the power of the Holy Spirit in the earthly life of Jesus and to think and say that that power of the Holy Spirit is the power and work of Satan meant that they would never in a million years come to Christ.

[26 : 43] Christ. It's not just because Jesus is going to not forgive them if they come to him. By what they said, they show that they will never in a million years come to Christ for forgiveness.

Never. Their heart has shown that they are never going to come to Christ. Just as Jesus himself said in John 5, we spoke about it on Wednesday night, Jesus said to them, you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and yet they bear witness about me yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

That's why they can't be forgiven because they refuse to come to Christ and they showed the same attitude after his resurrection because Stephen said the same thing in Acts chapter 7, you stiff necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit as your fathers did, so do you.

Why do they refuse to come to Christ? Because they refuse the Holy Spirit. Because the very spirit that would convict them, they are willing to call Satan. And while no one today can repeat that kind of blasphemy that they did back then, there will be no forgiveness for any who refuse to come to Christ because how can there be.

He's the only way. And Jesus said this in John chapter 8, unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. And so it's not about Jesus saying, I just thought a meatloaf there.

[28 : 22] I will do anything for love, but I won't do that. It's not that Jesus is saying I will forgive anything, but I won't forgive that. As if people could come to him and he won't forgive them, it's just that this particular thing shows that they will never come to him.

And if you don't come to him, then he can't forgive you. But the good news is that Jesus says if you can come to him, he will forgive you of anything. Now I'm going to circle back in a minute to the illustration that Jesus uses, but before that let's very briefly look at the final scene.

And it seems like it's picking up from the start again, where they're trying to seize Jesus because they think he's out of his mind. And so the message from his family finally get to him.

Your mother and brothers are outside, Jesus. They're looking for you. And so the question is, who is Jesus' family? Who are Jesus' family? Again, it's with good intent, but they don't understand why he's doing what he's doing.

Why doesn't Jesus just rest? Why doesn't he take a day off? Spend some time with your family, Jesus. Eat a little bit. Take a holiday. They care about him, but they don't understand him.

[29 : 30] And he cares about them. He really does care about his mother and brothers. But look at what he says. He says, well, who are my mother and my brothers?

And looking around at those who sat around him, he said, here, here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

You see, some people will misunderstand Jesus, even his own flesh and blood. But those who follow him and trust him, those who believe in Jesus, they have become his spiritual family.

They are his brother and sister and mother. He seems closer to his spiritual family than to his earthly family.

Why? Because they have their minds set on things of God. Because they understand him. Because they see him. Now, maybe you have family who don't believe. I know what that's like.

[30 : 32] Or maybe you don't have family at all. But if you are in Christ, then be encouraged. Here is your family. Here is your family. Jesus is your family.

And look at how he cares for you. Your family are those who get Christ. If you follow Jesus, why would you feel more relation to somebody who doesn't get Jesus than to somebody who does?

Now, how good would it be if you do have a family? I'm sure you have a wonderful family. I'm sure many of you know what it's like to be close to people and to know the joy of that.

How good would it be if you felt this close to your spiritual family? I know we're not perfect. I know it doesn't always feel like that, but how good would it be if you felt this close?

And that's a surprising thing. Jesus says, no, this is my family. And he's not trying to dishonor his mum. He's not trying to dishonor his brothers. But he sees something greater and more lasting than our earthly lives.

[31 : 44] He sees a spiritual and eternal family that is more precious to him. And if you're in that family then you're more precious to him than even his earthly family. Now his earthly family did get round.

His earthly family did become a spiritual family. But you see how Jesus is guarding against something that would happen in the future where people would honour Mary in some idolatrous way.

And Jesus is guarding against that saying earthly family isn't what it's all about. Earthly relations don't matter as much as spiritual relations. How good would it be if we were that close to our spiritual family that we felt that kind of love and that kind of relation and that kind of joy.

And the only way to get there is not by pointing out each other's flaws or waiting for other people to make it happen. The way to get there is by loving one another because Peter says this in 1 Peter 4 he says above all keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins.

And are there a multitude of sins in here? I'm sure there are. I'm sure there are and maybe sometimes I'll do that against you and I'm really sorry but love covers a multitude of sins.

[33 : 00] Paul says in Romans 15 we who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good to build him up for Christ did not please himself but as it is written the reproaches of those who reproach you fell on me said Jesus.

Think about that last part there. The reproaches against you fell on Christ. Christ all the criticisms that people could have against you all the complaints and disappointments and disapproval of all of our failings fell on Christ.

And so why should we attack one another for our failings and complaints and disappointments? Why should we point out and reproach when our reproaches fell on Christ?

Christ. This is what it means to be in the family of Christ. What an amazing family it is to be part of. As Matthew Henry puts it it's a great comfort to all true Christians that they are dearer to Christ than mother, brother or sister.

And at this point his family only seem to have their minds set on things of man and Jesus is saying his family are those who have their minds set on things of God. And so why is it Jesus is doing what he's doing?

[34 : 20] Finally let's look at this. Jesus is plundering Satan's house to take people to his father's house. Isn't that encouraging? Takes me back to something at the start.

One of the big points in this passage is why does Jesus do what he does? Who can understand it? Well the people that have their minds set on things of man will not understand it because Jesus is doing the will of God.

Yet there was hope. There was hope and the hope comes through his spirit. His brother. You see James and Jude, his brothers become an important part in the early church when they finally believe after his resurrection.

They finally understood what Jesus is doing and Jesus tells us what he's doing in verse 27. No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless they first binds the strong man.

Then indeed he may plunder his house. whether it was casting out demons or ministering to people at his own expense, at the expense of resting and eating, he didn't take a day off because he was binding Satan and plundering his house for our sake.

[35 : 33] He was taking for himself things that Satan once possessed. Even to this day the house is being plundered by Jesus through his spirit and by his word.

Now Satan may be a strong man, he's still got some tricks up his sleeve, but the Son of God is far stronger. Satan has nothing on him and he's been crushed and bound by him and his house has been plundered and plundered to this very day.

Jesus is plundering the kingdom of darkness and the house of Satan. Jesus said a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand and as it is the kingdom of Satan has been plundered by a greater king.

A greater king has come to rescue a people for his own possession, says 1 Peter 2, that they may proclaim the excellencies of him who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light.

A house divided against itself cannot stand, said Jesus, and as it is the Son of God has come down and broken into Satan's house to free the captive, to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, says Acts 20, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place in the Father's house among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ.

[36 : 56] 1 John 3, 8, John the disciple finally understood this and he said this, the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. This is why Jesus was doing what he was doing, because he is the stronger man.

He is the God man, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, who came down to Satan's dark domain to bind him and rescue me and you, that we might be part of his family and we might be taken from Satan's house to have a place in the Father's house with Jesus.

How good is that? How good is he? Amen. Let me pray. Lord, we thank you for such a great truth as this, that when Jesus came down to earth, nothing would remain the same.

Satan's kingdom has been plundered. Satan has been bound. His house has been broken into by the Son of God and those who were once in darkness have now saw a great light.

We thank you for Jesus. we thank you that he came down to do this for our sake, that we might have a place in his Father's house and not remain in darkness.

[38 : 15] It is right, it is pleasant, it is fitting to give thanks in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.