

Identity in Jesus

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Date: 21 October 2018

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[0 : 00] The section from verse 20 down to verse 35, the section that begins in verse 20 when Jesus goes home to the home, the place where he's staying in Capernaum.

The crowd gathered again so they couldn't even eat. Jesus and his disciples couldn't even eat and when his family heard it they went out to seize him. For they were saying he is out of his mind. The section that begins with his family and ends with his family. Jesus answered verse 33, who are my mother and my brothers? Looking about it, those who sat around him he said, here are my mother and my brothers.

Whoever does the will of God. We were singing there just there in verse 40. I want to do your will my God. The desire of the believer in his true earnest to do as God requires of him.

For whoever, Jesus said, does the will of God, he is my brother and sister. And in between these two sections regarding family, of course we see the opposition of Jesus, against Jesus.

[1 : 07] Those who consider Jesus being demon possessed. And you know, go to the present age, or relatively present age. The author and professor C.S. Lewis, who once famously wrote of the different perceptions of Jesus.

You know, in connection with the evidence of scripture. Lewis wrote this of Jesus. 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. What C.S. Lewis wrote about the different views of Jesus, well of course it isn't quite so very different to what Jesus' contemporaries thought of the Lord and Savior, as we read there in Mark 3.

I mean, as we read to the religious leaders of the day, Jesus was being equated with a demon possessed person. And then we read of his immediate family to them.

At that point in Jesus' ministry, Jesus was out of his mind. Even being considered a madman. So no reverence given to Jesus.

[2 : 23] No recognition of who Jesus truly is. The son of God, come from heaven to earth, the saviour of the world. And those who are making these false assertions of who Jesus was, and Jesus' identity, well of course by their own words were revealing their own identity.

A sinner's lacking faith in the Lord Jesus as the Christ, as the Messiah, as the saviour. And of course the question has to be asked of you, of me, in the sincerity of our own heart.

Who do you say Jesus is? The evidence is before you in the pages of Scripture. The evidence is there in Jesus' words and Jesus' actions.

And you'll either conclude on the basis of a lack of faith, that Jesus was a deluded madman, or by faith you'll believe in the word of God that tells us that Jesus was whom he claimed to be.

The son of man, to whom you, I, to whom we must give our lives in faith. Now if Jesus was a madman, deluded, then we might as well close this book.

[3 : 37] We might as well shut up shop. Live our lives for self-glory. Die in oblivion. But if Jesus is the son of God, then we must listen to him.

As we're doing this morning, hear his voice. Obey his word. Put our faith in him. Jesus, as God's word reveals, Jesus was and is the son of God.

He was and is the promised Messiah, the saviour, the only saviour. And you know, as we go through these verses, trust that we'll see this whole matter of identity.

The identity of religious leaders opposed to Christ's reign. And then we see Jesus' immediate family identified in their weakness of faith in Jesus, as the son of God, as Messiah, as the Christ.

And then of course, as we read towards the end there of that passage, the identity of those who are of the true spiritual family of Jesus. As we look through these various identities, above all, what do we see?

[4 : 48] We see the identity of grace in the Lord Jesus. We see him in his dignified stance. We see him refuting those who derided and accused him of something he wasn't.

We see Jesus in his identity as the Prince of Peace, the man, the saviour, the Lord of grace. Now, identity, because that's really our theme this evening.

Identity. It's a massive subject in today's world, in today's contemporary society. You know, we live in a very crazy, twisted world.

And identity is so much part of that identity in itself. You know, how we're supposed to identify ourselves, define ourselves in a particular orientation.

The secular humanist mindset asks, how do you identify yourself? It's become more and more a feature of, or an indication of how far society has drifted from the biblical truth, regarding the whole matter of identity.

[5 : 53] Listen to the word of God, as God describes identity. Now, of course, there's gender identity. Genesis 1.27, male and female, he created them.

There's national identity. Think of the nation of Israel, the peoples and other nations recorded in Scripture. And, of course, there's spiritual identity.

Who you are. Who you are in relation to the Lord Jesus, whether you're for him or against him.

Now, all these other identities are, of course, we might see valid in themselves, but they're secondary.

What's of the most importance is who you are in relation to the Lord Jesus. Your identity before a holy God. Your identity before a righteous Saviour.

And here in Mark 3, we see identity coming through in all the various aspects of that nature. Identity because, well, we see three aspects.

[6 : 57] The identity, as we said, of religious opposition to Jesus. And then, secondly, the identity of Jesus' true family. And, of course, the identity of Jesus as the Son of God.

So, the identity, firstly, of religious opposition to Jesus. And if you've been following through the thread of Mark's Gospel, as we've been going through Mark's Gospel, we've seen how there's been that relentless opposition to Jesus from whom?

From the religious authorities. And, of course, that opposition that would culminate three years later in Jesus being accused of blasphemy by the high priest and the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin.

And then they're sending Jesus to the Roman authorities to have Jesus tried and executed. That constant, relentless opposition to Jesus, even seen here in Jesus being accused of demon possession.

In verse Mark 3, 22, the scribes came down from Jerusalem and were saying, he's possessed by Beelzebul and by the name of Satan, or one of the names given of Satan, and by the prince of demons.

[8 : 06] He casts out demons. What's the context? Well, these religious leaders, they'd assume because Jesus was casting out demons from demon-possessed people, that Jesus must be demon-possessed himself.

That Jesus must be under the control of Satan, the prince of demons. And in their accusation of Jesus, and what they considered was Jesus' identity, they considered Jesus under the sway of evil, these religious leaders were actually confirming their true identity.

identity, the identity of evil, the evil of opposition to the sinless Son of God. They were denying Jesus' divinity.

They were denying Jesus' sinlessness. They were denying Jesus' authority as the eternal Son of God, and therefore Jesus equal with God. And these denials were coming from the very lips that were motivated by a faithless, unrighteous heart.

A heart that didn't want to know the Saviour as Lord. A heart that didn't want to know God as Lord. They didn't want to know that the Lord Jesus had come to destroy the works of Satan.

[9 : 27] And you know, it's one of the greatest tragedies of the wider church, that there are leaders, even leaders in the church, who deny the Lord Jesus in His authority, in His divinity, in His uniqueness as Saviour.

And you who know the Lord Jesus as Saviour, surely whenever you hear those who make these pronouncements against our Lord and Saviour, surely you should be grieved in your heart when you, you know, when those who claim to be Christians, when they deny the glory of Christ and replace that glory with a, well, just a mere morality.

devoid of divine majesty. And so, their identity is revealed in all its ugliest.

That identity of leaders, even in our wider church, who proclaim a moral Jesus, but not the Son of Righteousness, not the one bathed in the glory of holiness.

Now, I'm not saying all this to point any kind of finger, any kind of holier-than-thou viewpoint, but, you know, we do have to, again, theme of identity, we do have to identify those people who can persuade with fine-sounding words of morality, but a morality that has nothing to do with the gospel of salvation in and through the Lord Jesus.

[10:50] So, be warned, discern, and be discerning, discern, discern, discern, discern, discern, because there are those out there who claim that, well, Jesus is just one saviour out of many. There are those out there who claim that salvation is not found in the Lord Jesus alone, by faith alone, through grace alone, for God's glory alone.

So, in identifying false teachers, flee, flee from them, have nothing to do with the false teaching, the false theology of Christ denial.

Well, in that identity, identifying religious opposition, and certainly the identity of religious opposition to Jesus, what do we see that's horrific, terrifying?

terrifying. We see the connection between the denial of Jesus' true identity and condemnation, condemnation of eternal judgment.

You see that in the words of verse 28 to 30 where Jesus says, 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.

[12:05] And notice the joining word, verse 34. Because they had said he is an unclean spirit. You see, there were those who were accusing Jesus of being demon-possessed, but they themselves were treating Jesus as evil.

And because of that denial of Jesus' true identity, Jesus is saying that those who are making that claim, he's saying they have no forgiveness. Why?

As Jesus says, because they've sinned against the Holy Spirit. They've resisted the one, the person of the Godhead who reveals Jesus' true identity.

Now, let's bring all this to our contemporary application. Of course, as Jesus says, as we know, there is forgiveness for the repentant sinner. There is forgiveness for the sinner who calls on God for mercy.

Yes, we know when we do break God's law, there is forgiveness. There's forgiveness for you who come before God with that true contrition of heart.

[13:15] Jesus is saying here, there's a sin that is unforgivable, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. That deliberate and conscious denial of Jesus' true identity as the sinless Son of God come from heaven to earth to bring salvation to his own.

And that sin that the religious leaders of Jesus' day, they were guilty of as revealed when they claimed that Jesus had an evil spirit. Now, of course, today, generally speaking, of course, today, people aren't going to directly claim that Jesus has an evil spirit.

But there is contemporary application of that sin. It's alive and well. It's seen, well, we would say even in a mindset that declares that, well, declares that conversion to the Lord Jesus is the ultimate folly of mankind.

And to say, you know, that that is the case, we have to say, is utter blasphemy. And tragically, as we come back again, there's something we've mentioned just a moment ago.

That mindset that says that conversion to the Lord Jesus is the ultimate folly of mankind, is seen even in so many of our religious leaders, even leaders in the church today.

[14:31] And we pray that those who are proclaiming these false ideas, these false proclamations, that they will be silenced in their influence.

Just like the first sense religious leaders here who, you know, who tried to silence Jesus. who tried to silence Jesus and his claims regarding Jesus' true identity.

But, you know, as we read on in the passage, we see that actually the opposition of the religious leaders, of these religious elite, that opposition wasn't the only opposition to Jesus. Because Mark

shows us, secondly, well, as we see the bigger picture here, we see Jesus' family being mentioned. And in fact, broadening it out to see the identity of Jesus' true family. Because here in Mark's account of the hostility towards Jesus, Mark, as we saw, begins and ends this section with the whole aspect of family.

Because at the beginning there from verse 20, we see Jesus' family. We see his human family. And what do they say of Jesus? They say of Jesus that he's out of his mind. They're saying he's deranged.

[15 : 45] And at the end of the section, we see again Jesus' family mentioned. And he's highlighting family in context of who his true spiritual family is.

Who his true mothers and brothers and sisters are. Now, there's an awful lot to consider in these two connected sections. There's a lot to consider in the immediate context when Jesus spoke these words.

And of course, in our present application. So let's look firstly at his first mention of his family in verse 20. What do we notice? We notice that even his very family are opposed to Jesus' ministry.

They're so opposed to his ministry that they want to take him out of that home where he is. That home where he's staying. Take him away from all the work that he's doing.

Why? Because they're considering him deranged, out of his mind. And then there's that, as we said, notice that interlude in the story. And when Jesus confronts his religious opponents, then Mark comes back to family again.

[16 : 50] This focus on family. After his family call him to come out of that home, the word spreads, of course, through the crowd that Jesus' mother and brothers are waiting for him outside.

And what does Jesus reply? He replies with words that sound unexpected. But words that are entirely worthy of the Saviour and his love for his own.

Who are my mother and my brothers? And he looks around him and he says, here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

I think we have to sort out a few things here just to get rid of any kind of confusion in our own minds. let's remember first of all that Jesus loved his family.

Jesus loved his natural family. Jesus honoured his parents. Remember the commandment to honour your father and mother. Jesus honoured his parents as we see in the story of Jesus age 12 at the temple.

[17 : 55] And we know that Jesus loved his mother to the end. We see that on the cross.

Remember when Jesus on the cross even there calls on John the disciple to care for Mary to look after her.

Jesus loved his family. He loved them to the end. Even when his family misunderstood him, he still loved his family. Of course, we know that at least one of his siblings did come to saving faith in Jesus, his brother James.

James, the author of the epistle we're looking at in our midweek meeting. But what do we see here? We see here in Jesus' early ministry that even his close family didn't identify with Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

So, you know, we can't, you know, in any way accuse Jesus of somehow disassociating himself from his family, you know, somehow that he abandoned them in his love.

Of course not. What do we see? We see this application again and again. It has to be there in our lives. We see the priority that Jesus puts towards loyalty to him, our loyalty to Jesus, that he must have first place in our affection.

[19 : 16] Now, of course, brotherly affection is important. It's demanded and commanded in God's word. Family affection, absolutely necessary. Family love, of course, is crucial in any home.

Any family unity, love one to another, absolutely essential. Remember, your affection for the Saviour comes first.

Now, your identity, yes, it can be associated with church, you can identify with a church, with a congregation, you can identify with respect to your family, but first and foremost, your identity has to be in Christ.

because your ultimate identity depends on your relationship with the Lord Jesus. Your identity is defined in your relationship with the Saviour.

Because that's what Jesus surely is saying here and what might have appeared at first hearing an unexpected word of Jesus, that is utterly righteous. It's an utterly God glorifying statement about the

true spiritual family of Jesus.

[20 : 23] Because those who are Jesus' own, those whom Jesus loves, and you who love Jesus, are those who identify in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as Jesus says, in identifying with Jesus are those who do the will of God, those who do that will of God in believing in the Lord Jesus as Saviour and obeying Him.

Of course you love your family. Of course you love your brothers and sisters in Christ. That's important. That's necessary. It's God glorifying. But your love for the Saviour has to surpass every human relationship.

That Jesus taught elsewhere. Luke 14 verse 26, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

And of course hate, as in love, less, love, it doesn't mean no love at all, but love less than love for Jesus.

[21 : 28] Jesus who first loved you and gave himself for you in his unsurpassable love. And it's a love that a Christian believer has to respond to in their priority of loving Jesus first.

that means, of course, that there'll be occasions when that loving less, your parents or siblings or any other member of your family, it can be tough, it can be tough, but utterly necessary.

The missionary who serves in other lands, who serves away from even immediate family, a family he loves, but yet he's got to separate from for a time when he goes out to serve the Lord far from family and home.

Putting Christ first. For the student who studies at seminary, separated for a time from his family so that he can study in order to bring the gospel to needy souls.

That's loving the Lord Jesus, putting him first in his life. Or the Muslim convert to Christianity. And by the way, every one of these examples is real.

[22 : 40] The Muslim convert to Christianity, of who it was said at his funeral. It happened last year. His biggest heartache was the pain the family was going to feel at his commitment to Christ.

His passion was tearing him apart over his love of his heavenly father and his commitment to his earthly father and mother and family. This was said at this funeral.

Despite that man's pain, one thing was true. As he said in life, and it was repeated at his funeral, what I'm paying, paying in the cost of his commitment to the Lord Jesus, first and foremost, what I'm paying is nothing compared to what Jesus paid for me.

It's not always plain failing when we put Christ first and yet it's absolutely right. Because it's Christ affirming, it's God glorifying, and it's spirit empowering, yes, to take that road that follows the saviour, and of course, which will mean at times, being yet even parted from family for the sake of the Lord Jesus and for the sake of his work.

That's what's involved in being one of Christ's siblings, as it were, part of his family, which you'll be revealing your ultimate identity in him.

[24 : 04] And yes, in your own case and cases, when these times of parting do involve struggle, pray for God's strength. Pray that you'll show, yes, your continued love for your natural family, as you the more show that love for the one who gave his life for you in love.

So the identity of Jesus' true family, his true spiritual family is those who do the will of God, who love him and love his word and love his truth and put him first.

And then of course, there is the identity of Jesus, the Son of God, because we've seen the identities of those who oppose Jesus, we've seen those whom Jesus spoke of as his own family because of the relationship to God through Jesus.

But what about the identity of Jesus himself, as Jesus makes himself known here and even in this little section of Mark's Gospel? well, I think we have to focus on a few things here.

We have to see, first of all, what and who Jesus was not and then of course, what and who Jesus is. Well, what is he not?

[25 : 18] Who is he not? Well, of course, he's not of the forces of darkness, he's not of Satan's legions. I mean, how can he be? Jesus says, how can I be if I'm casting out demons and freeing those who have been gripped by the power of evil?

How can Satan cast out Satan? Can a kingdom divide itself and be strong and remain? Jesus says, of course not. So, if he's not whom his opponents say he is, then he must be whom he says he is and that identity can form by his actions because what he's showing, of course, in his actions, even

in casting out demons.

He's showing that he's coming to bring in that conflict with Satan and his legions. So, Jesus is revealing his identity and his actions against Satan.

Jesus challenges his opponents. Yes, challenges you and me to think of who Jesus is. You see, if Satan was casting out demons, he'd be divided.

Dividing his power, and of course, about to fall, but clearly Satan wasn't casting out demons. Clearly, Satan was certainly still alive and active, and he's still alive and active in his work of evil in the world.

[26 : 42] That's why Jesus speaks of his own work. What did he come to do? He came to bind Satan. He came to destroy Satan's power. power. And he shows that by a simple analogy.

This little parable here, just as in a house, a house where there's a strong man that lives. It's impossible to take his goods without binding that strong man, without suppressing that man's power.

Jesus says, that's where I've come. That's why I've come. I've come to the world. I've come to the house of Satan. I've come to suppress Satan's power. I've come to prevent Satan from exercising his influence over others.

I've come to free those whom Satan has once bound. I've come to free them, free you from the kingdom of Satan and bring you into the kingdom of God.

The kingdom we were speaking of earlier this morning. So Jesus' identity is revealed in his words, yes, and revealed in his actions. He's come to earth to defeat Satan.

[27 : 49] He's come to earth to free men and women from Satan's grip. He's come to conquer sin. He's come to conquer Satan. He's done so by his actions.

His actions seen ultimately on the cross. So we can say this in relation to Jesus' identity. I think we can look here in something wonderful, something perhaps we might even skip over.

But look at something in relation to Jesus and his identity. Look at the manner of his response to his accusers. Look at his response when he deals with the accusations against him.

His response is one of restraint. He doesn't unleash his fury at those who've accused him. They've accused Jesus, the sinless son of God with evil. Even in the face of unrestrained hostility, Jesus shows no fury.

What do you notice? He speaks with grace. He speaks with wisdom. He speaks in order to bring his accusers to see their own folly, so that they might see their own foolish arguments, so that they might be reconciled to him by faith.

[29 : 11] But notice, remember, as he shows his grace towards those to whom he's addressing, notice also he speaks of the eternal sin that remains unforgiven, because then the fury of God will be unleashed on those who will not bow the knee to the Lord Jesus, to King Jesus, those who will not have Jesus to rule over them, who won't acknowledge the true identity of Jesus as the saviour of the world.

So Jesus' identity here, we see it in his grace, in his grace and revealing to before men the truth of his identity and showing the consequence of refusing to accept who he is, as Jesus has made himself known by his words and his actions.

Yes, he's the prince of peace, he's the prince of peace to those who are his by faith, but to those who refuse to accept him as saviour and lord, who refuse to see in Jesus the one who's come to free men from their sins, Jesus is the bearer of the sword of judgment.

He is the prince of peace, but he is also the one who's come with that sword, that sword of judgment. The question that you have to ask yourself tonight is this, do you know, do you truly know Jesus?

Are you trusting in him with all your heart? Do you know him as your saviour and lord? Has Jesus entered your heart? Does he reign in your life?

[30 : 48] I mean, have you submitted to his rule and his reign? Do you know Jesus and his identity as he's made himself known as the saviour of the world? Do you know him as he identified himself in his love for sinners?

Yes, and that terrible swift sword of judgment. Even now, Jesus' fury against sin is restrained. And any who don't yet know him as saviour, the time is even now to come to him and know that forgiveness for your sins. What if you die in your sins? Where will you be under the eternal judgment of God?

So come to him. Belong to the true family of Jesus. Yes, you'll have that new identity. You'll have that identity that brings joy to your heart.

Yes, it brings joy to the Lord himself. You'll know that joy has been found in him. That you will have that new identity in him, identified in him, identified as a brother, a sister in Christ, identified in the one who loved you and gave himself for you.

[32 : 04] Amen. Amen. Let us pray. Lord, we have to confess our sinfulness before you.

When so often we seek identities that are far from that true identity in our Lord and Saviour. When we seek identity in secondary things and yet fail to show forth our identity in the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, help us even this week to show by our words and by our actions our identity in Christ. Help us, Lord, not to be ashamed of the Gospel, not to be ashamed of our Saviour, but by our words, by our actions, by our love, that we will reveal that true identity in him.

We thank you, Lord, that we have that assurance of identity in the Lord Jesus. When at one time we had that identity in everything that rebelled against our Saviour.

We pray, Lord, that as we show forth the Lord Jesus in our lives, that we will truly glorify him. So bless, Lord, we pray all that has been done in the service this evening.

[33 : 26] Forgive anything that's been said amiss from this pulpit. Forgive our drifting thoughts.

Help us, Lord, to fix our eyes in Jesus, to see him, the one who loved us and gave himself for us.

Be with us then, be with us in this first day of this new week, go before us in all things. May we truly have that faith in you, our God, the one who is, who knows the beginning from the end.

Help us, Lord, to put our trust in you so that we will truly go on our way rejoicing, knowing that you are with us even to the very end of the age. Continue now with us, we pray.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Let's sing in Psalm 16 on page 16.

Singing from the beginning down to verse 6. Protect me, O my God. You are my refuge, true. I said you are my Lord.

[34 : 30] I have no good apart from you. 1 to 6, Psalm 16 to God's grace. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.