

A House Divided and the Pleasure of Plunder

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Date: 07 October 2012

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[0 : 0 0] our father we ask now as we turn to your word that you would lift up our faces like the sunflower to you that you would open our eyes and our hearts to receive all that is good and we pray in this time that you would help us not to be deflected or distracted but to receive all that you have for us for we ask this in Jesus name Amen please sit down well now it's terrific to have a weekend to give thanks to God and to be with our families and to eat well and it will be terrific I think very helpful if you open your Bibles to the passage Carl just read to us in Mark chapter 3 7 to 35 and as I've studied it this week it is very like a Thanksgiving meal it's the full I don't know how many courses you have at home five course seven course I think is the most I've ever had so it'll be helpful if you have it open in front of you so that you can see what's going on Mark 3 7 to 35 this passage has so much in it that I will speak for a little longer than usual it's got it's got it's got it all really it's got miracles and healings and threats and narrow escapes it's got demons and Satan it's got an international riot and the unforgivable sin it's not unlike your Thanksgiving dinner probably with your family and I'm afraid what Mark sets before us here is very hot and I don't want you to burn yourself as we come close to it if you eat it too quickly my hope is though as we take it in it will actually warm us up spiritually you're not much used to anyone if you're a Christian and you're lukewarm about Jesus in fact one of the things that's going on in this passage is that he doesn't he just does not give us that choice by now in Mark's gospel people are starting to make up their minds about Jesus every paragraph we've had so far keeps leaving us with the question who is this what do you make of him and in two weeks time I hope God willing to preach on the passage of Jesus stilling the storm and I encourage you to invite friends who are interested to come to that to see what who Jesus is and what you make of him but the one thing you come away from this passage saying

I think one thing you can't say after listening to Carl read it this morning is that Jesus is a nice polite well-mannered Canadian and what the passage is about really is about a clash of agendas now it's not wrong to have agendas for other people it's not always a bad thing it can come out of love and kindness but if people's agendas for you are hidden and if people don't really know you and have agendas for you and you start to figure out they have agendas for you it puts up your hackles it does mine but when people who love you tell you about their agenda well then you're able to engage it disagree with it agree with it and get on the Bible's very open about the fact that God does have an agenda for us no one knows us better no one comes close to loving us more deeply no one has our best interest at heart no one knows what's best for us as he does so it's no surprise as we come to look at the life of Jesus the Son of God has agendas for us as well

Jesus' agenda in this passage is to do the will of God and that causes tremendous conflict tremendous clash because believe it or not our normal response is to resist the will of God and the people in this passage all the people around Jesus have agendas for him the crowd, his family, the clergy from headquarters and we're not meant to read this as though isn't Jesus a great guy who keeps going despite the agendas no no no the agendas these people have for Jesus are our agendas and as the story unfolds Jesus reveals what is really going on he takes us right up high and shows us what's at stake eternally so there are broadly speaking two clashes in the passage two halves of the passage and I'm going to spend much the greater time on the second just warning you if you're hoping the sermon comes to an end quickly by the end of the first just wait for the second helping the first clash I've called taking and giving and at first glance this covers verses 7 to 19 at first glance verses 7 to 12 look very happy don't they you know all these people have gathered they've heard Jesus' amazing power to heal diseases heal every disease they come from all the four points of the compass they come from inside and outside Israel and twice Mark uses a strange term first time he's used it great crowd great crowd it's an international multitude bringing to

Jesus all their friends all their family who are sick and he heals them all congenital diseases contagious diseases terminal diseases and when people come who have unclean spirits which is different from the sick people he casts the spirits out and muzzles them so that they will not speak and I think you can understand people walking for a couple of weeks and bringing their loved ones to Jesus to have him heal them

I would you know your father who's lame I would carry him a mother who was blind I'd lead her my deaf sister the aunt who's never been well my dying child I'd do the same but there's a very ominous note in this little paragraph 7 to 12 which doesn't come across so well in the English the international horde has gathered together beside the sea and if you look down at verse 9 Jesus tells his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd lest they crush him now that's a very strong word it's a word of violence and it's not hard to imagine isn't it being the centre of this vast crowd everyone is desperately pushing forward to one person because they have to touch him nothing's going to stop me from getting my loved one to Jesus and he is in danger the same is true in verse 10 it's not translated so well for he had healed many so that all who had diseases pressed around him the word is literally they were attacking him to touch him means to grab a hold of him and in verse 11 when the unclean spirits see him they don't fall down the word literally means they're assaulting him it's not a nice happy Sunday afternoon conversation we're given a picture here of raging roiling violence the demons are forced to comply and as the spirits come out of people the unclean spirits they try to get the upper hand over Jesus and they try to maul him it's a moving

I think a disturbing picture of the crushing need of humanity and just how far we will go to get what we want but the crowd is entirely self-serving they've no interest in Jesus personally they haven't they haven't come to hear Jesus preach the words of God they've not come to repent and place their faith in him they have not come for the forgiveness of sins they haven't come to enter the kingdom of God they're here with one agenda for Mr. Magic Man and they don't care if they kill him in the process and that is to use him for their own benefit despite the cost to Jesus we know don't we that though Jesus gives himself extravagantly and heals all in his path he heals people's bodies we know by now in Mark that that is not his first or his top priority he's come to do something far more wonderful and the danger for Jesus here is not just that his life is in danger but that he's going to be deflected from God's mission so how does Jesus deal with this clash of agendas what is Jesus' agenda verses 13 to 19 do you know what he does?

[9 : 24] he appoints 12 apostles think it's an anti-climax? wonder what that's doing there what does God do in the face of international need sickness and suffering and disease what does God do?

he builds his church what does God do in front of our demands and our needs and our agendas and plans? he founds a church on the foundation of the 12 apostles that's what he does so in verse 13 he goes up on the mountain calls those he wants the 12 in verse 14 I'll read it he appointed 12 whom he also named apostles so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons if you're familiar with the Old Testament this is the language of creation he's calling into existence he's making he's giving he creates a new entity he calls he calls this new entity this 12 apostolic based church to existence around him and I think there's also echoes from Exodus where God went up on the mountain and formed the people of God around him it's almost as though

Jesus is creating a new Israel Israel has already rejected him we saw that last week the leaders are plotting to kill him that's where we end at 3.6 and just as God formed 12 tribes of Israel around himself Jesus chooses 12 of his disciples and appoints them to be apostles around him not 11 plus Jesus he's not one of the group but out of the wider group of disciples there are 12 who are going to be with him full time and he's going to send them out and these 12 draw their direction ministry and authority from Jesus their work is an extension of Jesus' ministry they will have his authority and his message and they'll have his preaching because they've been with him so we'll see Jesus doesn't send them out until chapter 6 and even then they're nowhere near ready from here until the end of well pretty much the end of chapter 10 the focus of what Jesus is doing is not so much the crowds although he does teach and he does continue to heal it's on training these 12 he's making them into fishes of men he's pouring his life into these 12 so that he might share his ministry through them more widely they have the unique privilege and unique authority therefore so it was the last thing we did before I began preaching we said the creed and we said

I believe in one holy catholic apostolic church thank you the only church that extends Jesus' ministry and mission is one that is faithful to the apostles' teaching there are all sorts of churches that claim to be Christian that don't hold the teaching of the apostles they're not Christian churches you see the way that we have fellowship with God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord is as we have fellowship with the apostles preaching and testimony in the New Testament as we we don't we fulfill Jesus' purpose for us as a church on mission by being faithful to the apostolic teaching this is Jesus' answer to the crushing needs of the world it's a church built on the foundation of the apostles and the way in which every Christian church every local church including us at St. John's the way in which we make disciples of all nations is as we continue in continuity with the apostles' teaching otherwise we're making we're not making disciples of Jesus we're making disciples of something else

I know it doesn't look flashy and when you look at the church looks so weak and not much practical use this morning as we meet together here my son Ben is preaching in the cathedral in the Upper Shiree Diocese it is their 151st birthday today I know that because Ben wrote it on his blog now imagine the first Christian brothers and sisters who took the gospel to Malawi 150 years ago they also took medical care and education lots of other benefits but if they had not preached the apostolic gospel if they hadn't preached Jesus Christ in the New Testament they would not have established a church it would not have made an eternal difference you ask any church in Africa today what they are most thankful to God for it is this it is the gift of Jesus Christ and Jesus has a very definite agenda for us it's often different from ours and if you want to know what your agenda for Jesus is it's easy just ask yourself what you pray for but his agenda is to build a church on the foundation of the apostles which will not only bring healing to the sick help to the poor but will bring forgiveness of sins deliverance from death entry into the kingdom so that's the first clash the second clash

[15:02] I've called the clash of control versus liberty if you look down if you have the passage open this is the first sandwich passage in Mark's gospel by that I mean there's bread then there's meat or if you're a vegan some tasteless filling vegan that you can that's fine but I was for a while and then bread on the other side okay let's just call it filling so you look at the passage verses 20 and 21 Jesus family verses 31 to 35 Jesus family and the filling is Satan all about Satan very interesting that it's deliberately put together this way to explain what's going on because we don't have our domestic lives safely over here and our spiritual lives over here no no no they're deeply interconnected and the passage is showing us what's going on underneath this family's attempt to control

Jesus so the bread the first piece of bread 20-21 he went home the crowd gathered again so they couldn't even eat when his family heard it they went out to seize him it's another violent word for they were saying he is out of his mind so the crowd is gathered again Jesus is teaching again crowd with all their pressure and needs and agendas they are so insistent that Jesus doesn't even have time to have a sandwich and neither do the 12 so his family come over from his hometown to seize Jesus because they've come to the conclusion he's beside himself he's out of his mind he's mad and to seize him literally means to forcibly physically take control him and drag him out of the situation it's used for a rest later on they want to bring him home they want to settle him down to normal life so that he can eat three square meals a day it's a bit of an embarrassing story because the time

Mark was reading this Jesus' family had come to believe that he was the son of God but they only did that after the resurrection and Jesus' brother James was a big leader in the church of Jerusalem and I think it just shows the honesty of the gospel writers frankly at this stage though Jesus' ministry and mission is ruining their home life their domestic happiness and they're saying to each other look forgiveness in the kingdom of God is all very well but you can overdo it why can't we just have some peace and quiet ever since he's been out preaching and teaching there have been hundreds and thousands of people who've come in and disturbed all our turkey dinners to find out where he is he's put the clergy offside he's put the political leaders offside and he keeps touching people with diseases he's touched lepers and all kinds it's amazing he hasn't come down with something more serious it's just not on and so they say he's out of his mind and their agenda is to take him home they want to bind him and to seize him and to change the course of his life they want to take him away from the course that God has set him on and again it's a threat to his mission but in verse 22 before the family issue is resolved we are immediately interrupted by a visit of clergy from

headquarters and I want you all to fasten your seatbelts and watch the safety demonstration as we go into this passage it's all about

Satan and I know people have much more difficulty believing in Satan than they do in God many who say they believe in God think the idea of Satan is completely ridiculous and outdated you know the guy with the pitchfork and the horns and the red suit and it is it's laughable Jesus view of Satan is very different as we're going to see here and what happens in this little passage I think it's a very important passage and that's why I want to spend a bit of time on it is we are taken into the war room of what's really going on if you go to London you can go to the Churchill World War II museum and you can visit the war room and you go down to the war room it's very interesting actually the little bed that Churchill slept in and his pyjamas and I guess have some historical interest and in the war room there is the the war table and it has the map of Europe on it and it is exactly as it was on the day that

Germany surrendered and you can see the map and there's a little tiny wooden troops and little tiny wooden ships this is where the hard decisions were made and that's what Jesus is doing in this passage so in verse 22 the scribes came down from Jerusalem were saying there's an ongoing campaign he is possessed by Beelzebul by the prince of demons he casts out demons these are the serious heavyweights from Jerusalem they're not the local clergy it's an official delegation they've never seen Jesus they've never heard him they haven't come with questions they haven't come with openness they've come to stop this nonsense because you see when all you've got is positional authority and someone comes along who's got real authority it's a big problem it's not possible to remain neutral to Jesus and his authority and again they haven't come to repent or receive the kingdom of God they've come on a propaganda campaign and they've carefully thought through what they could do that would be most damaging to Jesus they can't deny his great power he keeps doing these astounding miracles and so what they do is they turn the truth upside down so as to vilify Jesus they call light dark good evil they say yes yes yes he can do spectacular things but he's in league with

[21 : 27] Satan he's possessed by the devil himself he doesn't come from God what he's really doing is not good don't listen to him don't go to him and they come up with the most exotic foreign sounding alien name for the chief demon Beelzebul prince of demons lord of the underworld they are calling white black now a few people today come right out and say that Jesus is evil don't they the way it happens today is they say that Christians are evil or what Christians believe is evil living waters is a ministry we support here in Canada we gladly happily do to Christ centered ministry of discipleship for relational and sexual brokenness the fact that living waters includes those who struggle with unwanted same-sex attraction has caused some groups to call the government to strip them of their charitable status I could multiply this story many times over the reason for this is