

A House Divided and the Pleasure of Plunder

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[0 : 00] Hey, well, well done. Well done on being in church. Seriously, like I honestly, you know, Sunday night, Thanksgiving weekend, I honestly thought it would be me being Janiti and just kind of hanging out, shooting the breeze.

So I didn't really write a sermon, to be honest. No, no, I've written some thoughts down. So the last couple of weeks, you've heard sermons on conflicts, right? Right? Jesus in conflict with people. And it says here that, you know, after these series, I think there are five major conflicts. Jesus withdraws to the sea.

And this is the first of a number of geographic locations in this passage that Jesus heads to in this chapter, right? So he's by the sea, he's on a mountain, and a couple of times he's in a house. And in each of these places, he faces a variety of groups. And each of these groups has their own agenda. It's about four or five different groups. And their agendas are not gospel agendas.

[1 : 03] They're personal agendas. And so the passage is setting up this kind of goody, baddy sort of scenario of Jesus is good and the others are a bit naughty, you know.

He's kind of setting up that scenario. But despite that, I would hope that as we kind of study this, that some, and these different groups and how they respond and react to Jesus, I would hope that we're trying to be understanding.

Because apart from the evil spirits here, these folks are rational, normal people like us, you know. They're just kind of normal folks. And, excuse me, it would be easy, it would be easy to look at how they react to Jesus and go, oh, they're just so stupid.

Or just, they're just awful people. Oh, they've got such hard hearts. I'm so glad that I'm not like that, you know. And I just feel like we shouldn't put too much distance between them and us because before Jesus called us, you know, we could have been them.

We were them, I guess. So, all right, let's get into the text. Folks, I'm recovering from a cold or a flu or something. So, at times it'll sound like my voice is breaking.

[2 : 16] And at times it'll sound kind of really awesome. And I'm going through a kind of a not awesome phase of my voice for a couple of minutes. So, excuse me.

All right. So, the first group I want to look at is the crowd. Okay, we've met these guys before, right? The crowd, you know. And they heard Jesus. They heard he's got power to heal people.

And so, they're seeking him out. And the crowd's very big. And like many crowds, they're a crowd they could get out of hand. And I don't know if you've been in a crowd like this before. When I was younger, I used to go to lots of concerts.

And today, it seems like the kids, the young'uns are kind of, I mean, I think you listen to like, you know, Mumford & Sons and Abbott Brothers and Sufie & Stevens or whatever.

So, it's all kind of folksy indie stuff, which is great. And I haven't been to one of their concerts. But I'm just assuming that at their concerts, you know, they play up there and you sit on large pillows and sort of paint each other's toenails or something, right?

[3 : 13] When I was younger, the music was, what kids were listening to was kind of punk or hardcore, right? So, you'd go to these concerts. And they were dangerous, you know?

And so, they have this big kind of crowd that are all banging up against each other. And at some point, the crowd would turn. At some point, the crowd would get ugly, right? And it's sort of like this big mosh pit would form.

And you try and wrestle your way out of that because, you know, people got knocked out or they'd break their nose or something. And it was kind of like madness. And I kind of thought about that when I was reading this passage because it says in verse 10 that they all wanted to touch Jesus.

And it says the crowd was this kind of surging crowd. And it says they pressed around him to crush him, right? It was a dodgy situation. It was a serious situation.

And the disciples even organized an escape boat for Jesus in case it all went sideways. So, the tenor of the passage, the vibe that we get is that this is not a good situation.

[4 : 16] This is not good for the gospel. Actually, Dave Little, can you grab me a glass of water, please, mate? Because I will not last the 47 minutes I've planned to preach this day. All right.

It's not good for the gospel. These guys are there. And their agenda, their agenda is fix me. Fix me, Jesus. I have a problem. Fix me. And, you know, they weren't coming to Jesus to be his followers. It's not like, oh, well, the kingdom of God is at hand. I really want to get some of that. And I want to be a follower of Jesus and a disciple. It was more they needed something from Jesus.

And we can understand that, right? They would have been very sick people there. People with deformities. Sick children. You know, it would have been terrible. So, you can understand them seeking Jesus out from all these different places.

There's lots of place names there. But they essentially wanted Jesus just to fix them. And here's the thing. Jesus loves to hear our requests.

[5 : 24] You know, he wants us to rely on him, of course. But we can't just come to him as a magic man, you know. If our prayer life is, Jesus, here's my list.

Do these things for me. And that's it. That's a faith that is self-serving. That's a faith with a small view of what God has to offer you. It's a faith.

Oh, look at that. And a stool. I'm so sorry, folks. I'm so sorry. It's just water, right?

Is it? Goodness. All right. It's a faith that's self-serving. It's a faith with a small view. Like a small view of what God actually wants to do in your life.

It's a faith that is shaped by our own agenda. When our lives should be shaped by his agenda. It's a hard word, right? It's okay, though.

[6 : 26] All right. The next interaction we come across is in verse 11. And this is 11 and 12. And we've already seen these guys in Mark as well. These are the evil spirits.

It says they fell before him and cried out, You are the Son of God. Don't mistake this for them begrudgingly admitting something.

Like, oh, well, I guess we have to admit that you're the Son of God and you're a great guy. In the ancient world, naming somebody was a way of trying to master them.

It was a way of, it was an attempt to control somebody. If you knew their full name, their title, right? And there are vestiges of this today. Benj, what's your full name, mate?

What's your full name? No, no, that's all right. Benjamin John Petrullia. Benjamin John Petrullia.

Okay, so people call you Benj. So if your wife or like somebody in authority said to you, Benjamin John Petrullia, there's that sense of like, oh, I'm in trouble.

[7 : 34] And they have a right to use my name in its full extent, right? Or like, you know, like a parent says that or a teacher, right? So these evil spirits were trying to gain control of a master him.

That's their agenda. And of course, Jesus won't have it. He orders them to be silent. And, you know, being God, they go silent. See, Christ will not have his divinity outed by them in this context, at this point in his ministry.

Okay, let's skip to verse 20, 21. Let me read it to you, 20, 21. Then he went home, and the crowds 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 is out of his mind. So the family of Jesus think he has gone mad.

It's a common motherly response, you know, oh, he's not eating properly. Let's get him home and sort him out, right? It says they want to seize him.

[8 : 37] The next time that word is used is in chapter 14, the soldiers seizing Christ, arresting him. So it's not a good thing. The family want to take charge of him, eh?

They want to confine him. That's their agenda. He's crazy. He's become a fanatic. My family aren't Christians. And there are some of you here who are Christians who love Jesus.

And you don't come from families that are Christian. And perhaps your families think you've got a bit too into this religious thing. And they kind of like it that you're kind of a bit religious, but, you know, they're a bit worried because you're a bit too religious and you spend a bit too much time in the church.

And perhaps they think you've joined a cult or gone crazy. I kind of think my family thinks that sometimes. Let me just say to you that Christ knows this.

You know, Christ is sympathetic to this. Go back to the passage. The agenda of the family was to tone him down, confine him. Verse 31.

[9 : 40] Later on, the family turn up again. Jesus has got his disciples. He's in a house with his disciples. The family turn up. They're outside. It says in 31. And his mother and his brothers came in standing outside.

That's an important word. They sent to him and called him. This is not a nice... They're not trying to get him together for a bit of a family kind of outing, right? This is an intervention.

You know, perhaps they've hired one of these... Those, you know, what do they call them? Those deprogrammers? A deprogrammer guy. Have you seen those kind of made-for-TV movies?

Thanks. Thank you, Reverend Little. Have you seen those movies?

You know, where that kid joins the cult and they hire the deprogrammer to kind of sort the teenage kid out, you know? Maybe they've hired one of those guys, right? Now, if you slide your eyes down the text here, you'll see that the family is outside the house.

Jesus is inside the house with his disciples. Those words are used purposefully. They want us to be in no doubt that the family of Christ is...

[10 : 41] The natural family of Christ is outside of God's agenda here. Not that God doesn't love them. They have placed themselves outside of what Christ is doing, what God is actually doing.

Folks, you can't control Jesus, right? You can't tone him down. You can't confine him. To attempt to do that is, well, it's silly, isn't it? But that was their agenda, and it was silly.

Okay, the next group have a pretty serious agenda, and that's the scribes, verse 22. The scribes who came down from Jerusalem, that's important, Jerusalem, are saying, he is possessed by Beelzebul, by the prince of demons.

He casts out demons. Now, do you notice that Jerusalem part, right? This is not a gaggle of kind of local country clergy riding around their bicycles, a bit worried about Jesus. Thought they'd have a bit of a get-together.

Ooh, we don't like what you're saying, you know. No, clearly what's happening here, Jesus' kind of town, right, is they've heard about it in the headquarters. And so they've sent in the big guns, the guys, the scribes from Jerusalem, and they've come down, and they're going to kind of sort this out.

[11 : 53] And they want to shut Jesus down. That's their agenda. Shut this guy down. But he's doing all these miracles. So they have to make an account for that. So how do they deal with it?

But first, let me just, don't you think it's interesting that no one, or two things actually, it's interesting, no one ever questions the miracles, right? At no point does everyone say, well, I just think it was mass hysteria.

It's all been overblown. He didn't really do these things. No one's questioning his ability to do miracles. And he also noticed that just witnessing miracles, or just knowing about miracles, or believing that he does miracles, it doesn't necessarily lead to faith, does it?

You know, we have this idea, oh, if Jesus, if God would only just turn, you know, like a light on and off in my bedroom if I prayed hard enough. If he did that, then I'd believe.

Wow. Not necessarily, by the looks of it here. Anyway, that's not the main point. The main point is this. These religious leaders need to make an account for why Jesus can do these amazing things.

[12 : 58] So they say this. This is their strategy. They go, well, it must be from the devil. And Jesus responds with logic. Isn't that cool? He responds with logic.

So they say, by the prince of demons, he casts out demons. And Jesus, this is my kind of transliteration here, Jesus responds to them with logic. He says, so, religious leaders, what you're saying is this.

You're saying that the devil is empowering me to destroy the devil. That's your argument.

And then he goes on to talk about binding the strong man, but I'm going to come back to that because that's actually a mission statement of Jesus. So we're going to come back to that.

Okay, a little summary. So the crowd are basically looking out for number one, I think. They're self-serving. The evil spirits want to control him. That's their agenda. The family thinks he's nuts.

[13 : 59] They want to tone him down. That's their agenda. The scribes think he's evil. They want to shut him down as well. That's their agenda. Now, of course, Jesus has an agenda as well. One he's been pushing in the passage.

Let's have a look at it. Before we get there, though, I probably should mention the unforgivable sin just in case somebody's done it. No, no, you're fine.

You haven't done it. All right. Let me say two things about the unforgivable sin. That's kind of like verse 28, 29, right?

It's kind of a jarring passage. You sort of go, ooh, how does that kind of work? Like, I thought I could do anything and it would be sweet with God if I was sincere and asked for forgiveness.

Okay. Two things about that. Verse 28. See, in the shock of that last part, that there is an unforgivable sin, we can sort of slide really quickly past the first part, which is beautiful.

[15:01] Verse 28. Truly I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man and whatever blasphemies they utter. All sins will be forgiven the children of man and whatever blasphemies they utter.

Folks, there is forgiveness. There is forgiveness for your secret sins, for your sins that are repeated more than they should be, for everything that makes you feel unclean.

There is hope. There is hope because there is forgiveness. It's a wonderful promise. But there is an exception. And the exception is called the unforgivable sin. And what these guys have done in this situation is they have judged what Jesus is doing as evil, as a result of their hard hearts.

And what Jesus is saying here, basically if I can summarize this whole matter here, if you continue to view Jesus in this upside down manner, as a result of your hard heart, throughout your life, there is no forgiveness.

Now if you have worried that you have accidentally done this, you haven't. The fact that you worry about it means it's impossible for you to do it.

[16:20] It's basically the sin of not being a Christian, if I can put it like that. Okay, let's get on with Christ's agenda. So Jesus has two main agendas here that he's trying to get across at us, right?

The first one, he is about creating a new people based around him. And secondly, he's about binding the strong man, which is that little line in that kind of miniature little parable that came about that was part of his response to the scribes, okay?

Okay. First, building a new people. Verses 13 to 19 there, if you look at that, remember that scenario? He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he desired and they came to him and he appointed 12.

And then those names, including the sons of thunder, that's so cool. Okay, so Jesus goes up a mountain. Your ears should prick up. Goes up a mountain. God does awesome things on mountains.

He calls 12 people. That's not like a natural, that wasn't a natural grouping like a dozen back in the days, okay? Okay. The fact that it's 12 points to something. You know, your ears should prick up again.

[17:29] 12 sons of Jacob who founded the 12 tribes of Israel. So up the mountain, the 12, what does that all add up to? Well, Jesus is reconstituting Israel.

He's not replacing Israel. He's like reconstituting. He's expanding. He's creating a people brought together, unified, not on the ethnicity, but based on him calling them.

We see it here and we see it at the end of the passage where Jesus looks around at his followers and says, you know, this is my family. And I'd love to spend a lot more time on that, but I really want to get to this binding the strongman part.

So let's do that. All right. Binding the strongman. So this is what Jesus says he's going to do. So it's part of the argument, right? The scribes are saying he is evil and Jesus says, well, that's just illogical.

And then he gives us this insight into what he came to do and it's a little mini parable. Verse 27, but no one can enter a strongman's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strongman.

[18:42] Then he may plunder his house. This is just not like a clever response. This is a mission statement. The parable means this, okay? You don't go to some really muscly, strong guy's house and just start taking his stuff.

You've got to tie the guy up first. You tie him up, then you can ransack his gear, right? That's kind of basically what he's saying here. So, how does that relate to us?

Satan is the strongman. The house, that's Satan's kingdom. Jesus is the stronger man and he's going to do two things.

He's going to bind Satan and he's going to plunder the house, i.e. he's going to plunder Satan's kingdom. Look, I know this sounds really kind of like fairy tale-ish and kind of up here, but it's painting this wonderful picture of what's happening on a cosmic level, okay?

Yeah, I'm going to skip that. Okay, it's painting this wonderful picture of what's happening on a cosmic level. Okay, so, Jesus is going to sort out Satan and plunder hell. The treasure, the plunder, the booty, you know, to use pirate terms, right, is people.

[20 : 04] It's us. And why are we in this house? Because our hearts are captive to sin and we are under the curse of death. Sin and death, those are important words in the Christian faith.

When Jesus casts out these demons in people's lives that we read about a number of times, this is a small binding. It's a little glimpse into what Jesus is going to do on a really massive level, what he is doing on a massive level, what he has done on a massive level, right?

On the cross, Jesus pays the price for our sin. So sin is dealt with. Satan can no longer hold that over you and go, oh, you're just awful.

You're, you know, you're mine. No, no, I'm God's. I've been forgiven. Through his resurrection, Jesus demonstrates that he has overcome death, saying he can no longer hold death.

You're not under the curse of death anymore. Death has lost its sting. To use another biblical verse, right? That's, that's what plundering hell is. That's what Jesus is doing when he's plundering hell.

[21 : 11] And Jesus does these things for us because we can't do them for ourselves. A summary. So, the passage is two kind of major themes or halves that are kind of sandwiched in to each other.

There are our agendas for Jesus. One, control him. That's not really going to fly, right, with the king of the universe.

That's going to, you're going to bump into some resistance ultimately there, right? You can't control Jesus. Two, you can write him off as crazy or evil.

Family thought he was crazy. The scrubs thought he was evil. Now, if you don't think Jesus is God, if you're here and you're not a Christian, if you don't think Jesus is God, the only two other options you have are those ones.

That he's a madman or he is awful or perhaps a combination of both. So, he's awful, he's a madman or he actually was the son of God.

[22 : 21] Three, the other agenda is use him. And if Jesus is just the giant sort of candy man, then, well, you're really missing out, eh, on the wonderful thing that God has for you.

So, those are the examples of the agendas people have for Jesus and they hold up a mirror to us, I think. And then there's Christ's agenda for us. He has an agenda for us because no one knows us better.

No one comes close to loving us more deeply and nobody has our best interests at heart more than the Father. And his agenda for us is twofold.

Rescue us and make us part of his family. So, this Thanksgiving, folks, has been just kind of mentioned here, eh, let's be thankful for not just our biological families and natural families which are wonderful.

Let's not just be thankful for peace and good food and health, et cetera. Let's be thankful that Christ has neutralized the evil one, that he has plundered us from hell, that he has brought us into a new people, a new eternal family, and that he has shared his mission with us.

[23 : 42] Amen, amen, amen, amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.