

Has Jesus Lost His Mind?

In recent polls, 97% of the American population say that they have a positive opinion of Jesus Christ. If you were to interview most of those people, however, you would find that they have a positive view of Christ only because they don't know Him very well! When they encounter His teachings on marriage and divorce or on God's judgment upon those who refuse to repent and believe or His teaching on the exclusive nature of the Christian faith, they often will either change their opinion or challenge the veracity of the Scriptures. This should not surprise us. Such was the case in Jesus' own day, revealed in today's text.

Mark 3:20-35

20 Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. **21** And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."
22 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." **23** And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? **24** If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. **25** And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. **26** And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. **27** 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.
28 "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, **29** but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"—**30** for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."
31 And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. **32** And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." **33** And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" **34** And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! **35** For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

I. Jesus' family called Him crazy. (vv. 20, 21)

Jesus was going without food, sometimes without sleep; He was constantly thronged with needy people; He was violating cherished Jewish religious traditions; and He was getting Himself into big trouble with the authorities of His day. His family thought He had snapped. They (including Mary!) had come to intervene on Him, get Him home, and get Him well. But John, in his gospel (7:5), tells us the real problem: they didn't believe.

Sometimes our families and closest friends do not understand us or encourage us either when we give a tithe to the Lord or we serve on the mission field or we take a firm ethical stand. We should not be surprised. If you're His disciple, you might appear to be a little crazy. It's a contagious disease. You get it from Jesus!

II. The interfaith community called Him evil. (vv. 22-30)

The rabbis came from Jerusalem to examine the situation to see if heresy was occurring in Israel. They professed to love God, believe the Bible, support justice, and to tell the truth. They observed Jesus' teaching, saw His many deeds of kindness toward the poor, and witnessed His miraculous powers. Here was their astonishing conclusion: Jesus was demon-possessed and was casting out demons by the power of Satan! When people refuse to repent, it is amazing what they will say and do. We, therefore, should not be surprised at lies, distortions, and injustices perpetrated against believers and the Christian faith in our own day. We are the disciples of Jesus.

Jesus' answer to these outrageous assessments was twofold: your claims make no sense (vv. 23-27), and your hearts are desperately wicked (vv. 28-30).

III. Jesus calls us family. (vv. 31-35)

Only Jesus could take such a dark experience and turn it into a radiantly redemptive moment. This he does when His family passes word through the crowd that they want to see Him. His response makes two things clear:

1) Our natural families are not our ultimate relational commitments (v. 33) Jesus and His apostles make clear elsewhere that the true follower of Christ will lovingly and faithfully serve his/her family. See John 19: 26, 27 and I Timothy 5: 8. Note also that two of Jesus' half-siblings, James and Jude, later believe, take leadership in the early Church, and contribute books to the New Testament.

2) We are Jesus' own family! (v. 34) This is truly remarkable, given our unworthiness; but Jesus explains in the next verse how we were included: we are doing the will of God. What is God's will? Nothing more nor less than simply believing in the One He has sent--His dear Son, Jesus Christ (see John 6: 28, 29).

Discussion Questions

1. Share an experience when someone close to you, perhaps in your own family, thought you were foolish because of your Christian belief or behavior. Why did they think you were foolish or crazy? What should your response be?

2. Why is there often such strong emotion attached to religious opinions and differences? When have you experienced unfair treatment from someone because of your faith in Christ. Why did this happen to you? How should we respond?

3. What are the implications of Jesus' calling us His family? How ought that to change the way we live?

Going Deeper

What changes do you need to make in order to put Jesus in first place of all your relationships, including your natural family?

What changes do you need to make in your attitudes or actions in order to make Jesus' disciples (the Church) your eternal family?