

Mark 3:7-35 | Discipleship in the Mess

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I have a confession to make: contrary to popular belief I was not a ladies man in college. In fact I was terrified of women. I didn't know how to talk around them, I didn't know how to act around them, and my production of sweat was directly proportional to my proximity to a woman.

This didn't change when I started dating Sarah. The first date we went on I ended up talking to some guy who had just returned from touring the underground churches in Turkey for the majority of the date. And to show you how helpless I was, I left the date feeling like I nailed it, and Sarah was on the phone with her mom saying she would probably never go out with me again.

And the next time we went out we discussed marriage. And that intentionality of our relationship changed the way we related to one another. We didn't interact with each other as two kids looking to have a good time and enjoy goofing off in our youth, we looked at each other with the potential of being bound together in marriage. That conversation changed everything about my awkwardness and changed everything about our relationship.

As humans we face a similar point when it comes to our relationship with God. This division is the belief and unbelief divide. You can be around Jesus, you can hear the message of Jesus, but ultimately, unless you cross from belief into unbelief you will not really know Jesus, and you will not really know what it means to be with Jesus.

What I want you to hear is that everything you do here on this earth comes down to your relationship with Jesus. Do you believe, or do you refuse to believe?

This text is a transitional text in the book of Mark, it's kind of in limbo between the passage we saw last week, and the full-fledged teaching ministry of Jesus. Last week we saw the scribes and Pharisees setting out to destroy Jesus, next week we will see the big kick off of Jesus' teaching in the book of Mark. And this week lives between these two hedges.

And the whole weight of Marks message in between these things is how do you relate to Jesus? So let's **pray** and look at our text tonight.

Mark 3:7-11

This is really a set up piece for what is coming next but I want us to see two things from this text.

1. The gravity of Jesus.

Look at this map. Now Jesus has really been doing ministry in one area, near the sea of Galilee, and yet this text says that people were coming from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan (Transjordan), Tyre and Sidon. So for those of you who were in church a couple weeks ago when John looked at the map of pentacost, we see that Jesus is already drawing large groups of geography to himself.

And the interesting thing here is that Jesus is a Jew, and Jews are the ones looking for a Messiah through which, they think, he will establish once more a Jewish nation. But if you look at the map of people who are

coming to Jesus, we see that Idumea and Transjordan are mixed race areas, and Tyre and Sidon are predominantly if not wholly Gentile.

This is important in light of what we discussed last week. Jesus the new David, Jesus the new Sabbath, Jesus is also the new Israel. Why are we here today talking about this? Because Jesus didn't come for Jews, he came for people. And we are beginning to see that even in the early parts of Jesus' ministry.

2. I want you to look back at **Mark 3:11**. Amidst the large crowds the clearest confession of who Jesus is comes from the demons. It's not the crowds, it's not the religious officials who are seeing who Jesus really is, it is the demons. People don't yet see the truth about Jesus.

So the scene of this portion of Jesus' life is huge crowds and limited knowledge. That's important considering what comes next.

Mark 3:13-15.

Amidst all that is going on Jesus is calling twelve men to live in a specific and unique relationship with him. There men are these twelve disciples, the twelve apostles, big guys in the history of Christianity and yet what makes them unique? They are not from powerful families, they do not bring vast amounts of wealth and resources, they aren't bred to be religious historians or expert teachers of the law. What makes Jesus' disciples his disciples is Jesus himself!

The defining moment of the disciple's faith isn't their readiness, their preparedness, or their prior relationship. The defining moment of these men's life is Jesus.

Jesus was standing with thousands of people. Mark goes to great lengths to describe the crowds but what separates these twelve men from the crowds: Jesus does.

This is true for all who are saved. What qualifies you for your Christian faith? What qualifies you to be in relationship with God? You've heard the old phrase "heaven won't have me and hell won't keep me." We can sometimes build up ideas in our brains that we are not good enough, we are too sinful, we are too messed up, we are too broken to be used by Jesus. But it was never about your performance, it's about Jesus'.

Catholics specifically have ruined the word "saint." They have boxed it up sealed it on a shelf and guard it with a big book of requirements and only the holiest of the holy, the purest of the pure can reach the title of sainthood. But look at what Jesus does for us. **Col 1:11-12**. Give thanks to God because you have been qualified as saints not through your own work, but through the work of Jesus.

For those who Christ has brought to himself, we are all saints. But I don't want to lose the importance of these twelve men. Because for the rest of Jesus' ministry, he is really going to center everything around these 12 dudes. He decodes his parables specifically for them, he gives them VIP teachings that he doesn't give to the crowds, he brings them with him, they see his miracles, his healings, his teachings, they will know Jesus' in the flesh in ways no one else will know him.

And Jesus gave them a charge: **Mark 3:14-15**. Jesus gives them authority to cast out demons, Jesus commissions them to preach, this is something we saw when Jesus called the first disciples, he called them to be fishers of men, and yet both of these are secondary to the first purpose of Christ: that they might be with him.

Why? We should be asking two why questions here. Why them and why now?

Why them? Why did Jesus need these men? I just had the unfortunate privilege of watching the new Transformers movie. And in it Optimus Prime is sending out a beacon for all the Autobots to come and gather with him. Optimus Prime needed the autobots because he needed their help. Does Jesus need help? Would Jesus have been unable to accomplish what he wanted to accomplish if it wasn't for these 12 men?

No. Jesus didn't need men. But Jesus chose men. He chose men not because he needed men, but because men needed him. The 12 disciples weren't there to serve Jesus, Jesus was there to serve the 12.

My second why is why now? I mean things are about to get messy for Jesus. We are one verse away from things getting really awkward. Jesus knew what was going on. He knew he was going to die and be raised up. And in the Bible we see the resurrected Jesus talking to hundreds of people. Wouldn't that have been a better time to call disciples? No opposition, no conflict, no beatings, whippings, or death march. No public mockery, not bloody crucifixion, no scattering of the disciples.

Jesus called the disciples now because he wanted them to see the gospel in the midst of affliction. Jesus called the disciples now because he was preparing them for life in the valley. Life after the cross, but before the final return of Jesus. He was preparing them for life in this mess.

We see this happen almost right away.

Mark 3:20-21. Immediately we see conflict. The crowds are there, his family is there. There is no room, there is opposition and that is just the start of it.

Mark 3:22. So Jesus is facing opposition from his family, and now he is facing opposition from the learned religious leaders. This is the irony of Jesus. In verse 11 we see the Demons see Jesus clearly. In the previous passage we see 12 random dudes who are beginning to see Jesus clearly.

And yet the two groups of people we would expect to know Jesus best are totally missing it. His family thinks he's crazy, and the scholars of the Old Testament, a book which points to Jesus, say that he is not actually from God, or God himself, they say that he is possessed by Beelzebul, the prince of demons.

Look at how Jesus answers them: **Mark 3:23-30.**

Jesus responds to them with logic. If I'm Satan, and I have come to cast out demons, I am actually harming myself. Satan is not interested in harming himself, he is interest in harming you. Jesus then speaks to the issue of sin. He says that Jesus Christ came to forgive all sins. All sins will be forgiven except one. One which he calls blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

Now this verse is not meant to bring us worry, but rather to bring us confidence. They were saying Jesus is Satan. That's a bold claim and the root of that claim is unbelief. What Jesus is saying here is that for those who believe, all sins will be forgiven, but for those who refuse to believe in me, there is eternal damnation. The stakes are real.

It's not simply do you believe or do you not believe. It is will you live or will you die. And the unfortunate thing is that the Bible clearly states our predicament: We are dead, we are captives, we are incapable of our salvation. This is the devil's world. This is a world where we are all drinking Satan's cool-aide and are unaware of its poison.

But look at what Jesus said: **Mark 3:27.** Satan is the strong man. Satan has this world in his death grip, he is a roaring lion, the prince of the power of the air. But Jesus has come to bind him.

Jesus has come to lose the chains of death by binding the man who enslaved us. The ultimate man has come, and he has come to plunder death.

I was thinking on this passage this morning, and Jesus is responding to the Pharisees here, but Jesus also knows that these Pharisees will not believe. He knows they are plotting to kill him, and he knows that they will kill him. And then it hit me. Even though Jesus was responding to the Pharisees, he was speaking to his disciples.

The disciples needed to hear this.

I mean look at what happened immediately after this: **Mark 3:31-35**.

We see opposition from the Scribes who were related to Jesus academically. We see opposition from his family who was related to Jesus genetically. And yet Jesus defines the priority of relationship through what?

Believing and doing.

What matters most in your life is not your knowledge of Jesus. What matters most in this life is not your proximity to the gospel, your church attendance, or moral code. What matters most in this life is if you follow Jesus.

Faith is the ultimate relationship.

And Jesus frames faith as knowing and doing. Look at what John, one of the apostles says in **1 John 2:2-4**. John says if we know Jesus we follow Jesus. If we believe in Jesus we do like Jesus.

Now remember what Jesus called the disciples to do: To be with him, to preach in his name, and to cast out demons. Jesus knew that many of these men would die doing this very thing. They would be hung upside down on crosses, thrown off buildings, dipped in vats of boiling oil, bitten by snakes, shipwrecked, persecuted, murdered and mocked.

And what motivates them amidst this conflict. Jesus, the one who bound Satan, and brings us into relationship with God.

What does this mean for us? I have two questions: Do you believe? And are you doing believer things?

For the first question: Believe because Jesus has bought your belief. Believe because the strong man has been bound and Jesus has freed you from sin: **Rom 6:7-10**. Live in new life for Jesus.

For those who are living. Do you see the reality we face? We live in the midst of belief and unbelief. For those who believe this message is our salvation, for those who do not believe this message is folly. And yet in this mess we are called to preach Christ, witness Christ, care for others, reach the lost and worship God.

What is our confidence in this as we face affliction? The gospel was birthed in affliction. Our hope, is that we belong to God wholly through Jesus Christ.

Stop thinking like the Pharisees, and thinking that knowledge is a sign of faith. Stop living like Jesus' family and thinking that proximity and casual relation lets you dictate how you treat Jesus. Start living like a disciple and doing disciple like things because we belong to the Father who hold the world, on our lives in his loving plan.