

Where Jesus Goes, Accusations Follow; Series: Lent

Mark 3:20-35

Westside Fellowship CRC; 18 February 2018

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If you happened to have begun reading the gospel of Mark at chapter 1, you will have noticed that Jesus has been on the move. Ever since the beginning of his ministry, he has been moving back and forth, back and forth between crowds of people and solitary places. In Mark 1, he is baptized by John, presumably with lots of John's disciples around (1:9-11), and then he was thrown out into the wilderness to be tempted (1:12-13). And then he went into Galilee, preaching (1:14-15) and calling his first disciples to him (1:16-20) and driving out impure spirits (1:21-28) and healing many people (1:29-34), and then he goes off to a solitary place (1:35-36)... but not for long because his companions came and found him and said, "Everyone is looking for you!" (1:37). So then he went preaching (1:38) and he cleansed a man of leprosy (1:41). And news of him spread. "As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere" (1:45).



In chapters 2 and 3, you've got a similar dynamic going on, with the crowds piling on and Jesus healing and preaching and then withdrawing as needed (3:7, 3:13), and bringing companions around him/calling disciples as needed (2:14, 3:13-19).. But now, you've also got an added dynamic – the crowds aren't all friendly crowds... the crowds aren't all there to hear his message or to receive his healing or to be released from their bondage to impure spirits... Mixed in among the crowds are people who are were a little suspicious of what they were seeing. Teachers of the law and Pharisees. Where Jesus went, questions and accusations began to follow. "Why does this fellow talk like this? He's blaspheming!" (2:7). "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (2:16). "Why aren't you fasting?" (2:18). Why are you doing unlawful things on the Sabbath?" (2:24). Where Jesus Went, Accusations and Questions followed. In 3:5 we read that Jesus was deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts.

Now, I want you to imagine that you are one of Jesus' disciples. Maybe Thaddaeus, and you have just spent some time with Jesus on a mountain. He had seen you in the crowds – and indeed, you had sought him out wherever he was speaking. And he had touched your shoulder and invited you to join him and several others on a mountain. There he told you that he needed you to stay close by – to learn from him – to get to know his Father better – to watch how he lived and interacted with people and healed so that you, too, might take on this work and word of the kingdom.

It's now mid-day and Jesus is leading you out of the heat of the sun and into a house. As preparations are being made for a mid-day meal, you notice that it's not just you and those who had been with Jesus on the mountain in the house, but somehow your group got bigger. A mother walks in purposefully with a few children clinging to her skirts, a group of teenaged boys looking very serious and hopeful find a place in the corner of the room... a man brings in his wife. Her eyes are closed; she is speaking in a steady and intense whisper, and she is trembling. Her husband looks desperate and tired. And you know that the fish and bread you had been looking forward to is just going to have to wait. There was work to be done. Jesus catches your eye and smiles. Watch and learn, Thaddeus.

You stand quietly by the door, and as you look out at the crowd that is gathering around the house, you see her. A woman in her 40s, her hair just beginning to streak with grey... and two young men standing near her. They're arguing about who is going to go inside. Should she go? Should they go? Just one? All of them? "Well, one of us has to," the woman says. "Enough is enough. He's out of his ever-lovin' mind." And though you have never met her before, you know who this is. You hear his voice in her voice. You see the flash of wit and wisdom in her eyes – the same flash you've seen in your new master's eyes. This is her. His mother. And these are his brothers. And they have come on business. Not the business of learning... or the business of being healed, but the business of calling time out. Times up. Enough is enough with all this going to and fro, hither and yon. They'd let it go for a time, but now the Pharisees have caught wind of what is going on and the teachers of the law are buzzing. And there are rumours floating around that the authorities want Jesus dead. Does her son – their brother - have a death wish?

Speaking of the teachers of the law, here they are now... The crowds part and you step aside as they swish past you in their robes that smell of parchment and prestige. Their voices rise above the din in the house and the shortest one with the loudest voice calls out the accusation. "This one here" (he points at Jesus). "He is possessed by Beelzebul!" He looks around at the house, so packed now with people – setting hooks of doubt into their hearts as he speaks, "Why do you think the demons listen to him? Why do you think the demon – the one in this woman right here" (and he points to the trembling and whispering wife) "why do

you think it is about to come out of her?! It's because this man" (and he points at Jesus again) "is possessed by the daddy of all demons. The other demons listen to him because he's their master!"

You look at Jesus. What is he going to do next? Well, he doesn't tell them to get out. He doesn't tell them to shut up. He doesn't tell them to stand down. He calls them over. And you move in closer, because he is not speaking loudly or harshly... he's using his calm, patient, teaching voice. "How can Satan drive out Satan? Why in the world would he want to do that? The impure spirit that is now in this woman is doing the will of its master. If I were possessed by that master, why would I want to stop my worker from doing my will? That is not the way the kingdom of darkness works. That is not the way the house of evil works. The house divided against itself cannot stand. No, no. The kingdom of darkness is united in its purpose of destroying lives. Satan has no desire to be divided against himself. He does not want his end to come... But I do," he says and turns away from the teachers of the law as they try to parse out the parable.

Jesus turns toward the woman. He holds her trembling, whispering face in his hands, and he speaks a single word – a long word – a word that sounds more like a song – could he have been calling her name? You're not sure... but what you are sure of is that her body becomes still. Her lips stop moving. She opens her eyes, smiles, and begins to laugh. She turns to her husband and they embrace and you watch his tired eyes fill with tears.

And you look at your master and you know that despite what his mother says, this man is not out of his mind. He is not out of his ever-lovin' mind. And he is not possessed by any dark mind. He is in his mind. And he is in his heart. He is of one mind and one purpose with himself. He is of one mind and one purpose with his heavenly Father. He is of one mind and of one purpose with the Holy Spirit. He is of one mind and one purpose with the kingdom of light. And that purpose is to cleanse, to heal, and to love.

They call him a law-breaker, but he is living the law of love! They call him possessed, but he is free and clear, filled only by the Spirit of God. They call him a blasphemer, but how could he blaspheme against the Holy Spirit – against the very one who animated his purpose of

wholeness and love? A house divided against itself cannot stand. But a house united in spirit and truth will stand forever.

Suddenly a little child comes running in to the house, pushing her way past the taller ones, and the ones in robes, and the laughing couple. "Rabbi," she says. "A lady and two older boys are outside and they want to talk to you. They said they are your mom and your brothers!" And Jesus laughs and picks the child up into his arms and walks in the small circle that is left in the midst of the crowd of people and as he pivots, he looks into each person's eyes. "Here is my mother," he says as he touches the arm of the smiling woman – almost as if he is introducing her to the child. And then, Jesus stops by you and says, "And here is my brother." And he hands you the child. "And you," he says to the little girl touching her nose, "you - when you do the will of God, you are my little sister." She laughs and hugs your neck.

"And now," Jesus says, "who's hungry?!" And there are plates of fish and baskets of bread. It's time for a family meal. Jesus begins the meal with a song of blessing... And you look around and you see the laughing couple, and the little girl... the teenaged boys... and even Jesus' mother and brothers and one of the teachers of the law has stayed for lunch. And though you've never been in this house before. You know that you are home.