

DAY 7: INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS

Mark 3:7-35

JESUS ATTRACTS MANY (MARK 3:7-12) Jesus now returns to the Sea of Galilee, where the enthusiastic crowds make a stark contrast to the scribes and Pharisees' hostility. The crowd comes from Galilee and Judea, as well as Idumea (south of Judea) and "*from beyond the Jordan*" (3:8), both of which were partly Gentile. Others are from Tyre and Sidon, Gentile cities far to the north. It is an astonishing fact, given the social divisions of the time, that Jesus is attracting Gentiles as well as Jews. He is more than a rabbi who is celebrated within the confines of Judaism; He is the Servant of whom it was said, "*I will make You as a light for the nations, that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth*" (Isaiah 49:6).

THE CHOOSING OF THE TWELVE (MARK 3:13-19) Now Jesus elects 12 men to stand in a special relation to Him as *apostles*—disciples in whom He invests extra time to prepare them to take the gospel to the world after He returns to the Father. Jesus ascends the mountain and calls "*those whom He desired*" (3:13). The fellowship into which Jesus calls the apostles is determined not by their preference but by His sovereign grace, and apart from His call, that society cannot exist. "*He appointed twelve*" (3:14) to this new community. Jesus calls the apostles: (1) to be with Him, (2) to preach, and (3) to have authority over demons.

THINK ABOUT how we sometimes focus on the "doing" expectations of discipleship—the ministries of preaching, healing, and service. Yet it was in the "being with Him" that Jesus would equip and empower His disciples to do the work of the ministry.

Do you enjoy the intimacy of quiet moments in God's presence? His call is no different today—He still calls men and women to "*be with Him.*" Consider these words from Oswald Chambers (*My Utmost for His Highest*): "The main thing about Christianity is not the work we do, but the relationship we maintain and the atmosphere produced by that relationship."

As the 12 chosen men are named, three things are striking. The first is how little is known about most of the apostles. Second, what is known about their social status is highly instructive. It seems that all the apostles are from the common people, rather than the religious establishment. It is Jesus' call that makes them capable of being part of His company. Finally, note the mention of "*Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him*" (3:19). Jesus' first followers are not perfect, nor do they have to be for Him to accomplish His purposes.

THE MIGHTY ONE WHO PLUNDERS SATAN'S STORE (MARK 3:20-30) After calling the disciples, Jesus "*entered a house*"; a place so crowded that Jesus and His disciples "*could not even eat*" (3:20). "*When His family heard it, they went out to seize Him, for they were saying, 'He is out of His mind'*" (3:21). The original Greek wording is more forceful, saying, "*He's gone mad!*" It is not simply the religious authorities who fail to understand Jesus, but Jesus' own family as well.

The scribes from Jerusalem also question His sanity, claiming, "*'He is possessed by Beelzebul,' and 'by the prince of demons He casts out the demons'*" (3:22). They do not deny Jesus' power; it is the source of His power that they challenge. In several different ways, Jesus refutes that He is in league with evil: on logical grounds, through a parable, and on theological grounds.

The scribes' accusation is logically absurd, says Jesus, for anyone who works at cross-purposes with himself simply hastens his own downfall. Jesus then presents a parable for them to ponder: "*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*" (3:27). Jesus came to plunder Satan's spoils and to rescue his captives.



Jesus exposes the theological offense of the scribes' accusation by warning them about the sin against the Holy Spirit. Mark says, in an editorial note, that Jesus said this "*for they were saying, 'He has an unclean spirit'*" (3:30). What is the sin against the Holy Spirit? Whoever can look at Jesus

Christ and say, “This is of the devil,” or whoever can look at evil and call it good, is a hopelessly perverse person—so perverse that the Holy Spirit can no longer awaken in him a desire to repent despite his knowledge of the love and sacrifice of Christ. Indeed this may be a special pitfall for *religious* people, for Jesus is talking here about the scribes! But—and this needs to be emphasized—anyone who is worried about having committed this sin has evidently not committed it, for the very anxiety of having done so is evidence of an openness to truth and repentance. Remember that there is no record in Scripture of Jesus denying forgiveness to anyone who asked!

INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS (MARK 3:31-35) The final encounter recorded before Mark shifts to a collection of parables in chapter 4 shows that not even blood relatives can claim privilege with Jesus apart from spiritual kinship—a relationship expressed by hearing and doing God’s word. The setting is sparse: Jesus is sitting in a room teaching a crowd. At some point in the discourse, Jesus is given a message that “*His mother and His brothers ... [are] standing outside*” wanting to see Him.

Mark says the family “*sent to Him and called Him*” (3:31). Whenever Mark uses *called* it means *a summons with an obligation to answer*. Jesus’ mother and brothers are also “*seeking*” Him, a term Mark defines by usage to mean *seeking to gain control over someone*. Mark clearly implies that Jesus’ mother and brothers presumptuously assume authority over Him. On the basis of family privilege, they seek to control Him (see 3:21).

Jesus admonishes such presumptions, however, with His question, “*Who are My mother and My brothers?*” (3:33). Here is the pivot of the story. Jesus’ intention was not to deny His family relationship, but to emphasize the greater importance of the spiritual relationship. Not unkindly, Jesus tries to awaken His family to realize that one’s associations—even blood relationship to Jesus!—are not what determines one’s standing with Him. Such standing depends on spiritual kinship—being in His saving presence and doing His will. The “*crowd ... sitting around Him*” is a picture of open fellowship, based not on heredity, but on faith and its fruits. Whoever has fellowship with God and does His will truly belongs to God’s family as brother, sister (added by Jesus, perhaps to emphasize women’s rightful place within the Christian family), and mother.

PERSONALIZE this lesson. It is impossible to meet Jesus and remain neutral about Him. One is either with Him or against Him. Consider each of the groups who interact with Jesus in this lesson. The crowds of people who converge upon Him expect healing and deliverance. The evil spirits identify, hate, and fear the Son of God. The 12 men who are appointed as apostles have given up everything to respond to His call. His family doubts His sanity and attempts to halt His ministry. The religious leaders accuse Him of being possessed and empowered by Satan and seek to destroy His credibility. Both Matthew and Luke include these words of Jesus in their records of this same event: “*Whoever is not with Me is against Me*” (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23). If a stranger were to observe your behavior and listen to you talk, would they know that you are “with” Jesus? Does this lesson prompt you to live more clearly “with” Jesus in any specific way? How?

REVIEW: INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS

9. Remembering your study of Mark to this point, record your thoughts on one of the following:
 - a. one or two claims Jesus made concerning Himself (through His words and His actions)

 - b. at least one significant lesson learned by His disciples