**Is Your House United or Divided?**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Mark 3:20-31**

**Wednesday Evening**

**October 3, 2018**

**20 Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.**

Saints, the house Jesus entered was most likely in Capernaum and may have, once again, been Peter’s house. As had happened twice previously, crowds began to gather. Again, the demand of the people in the crowd made it impossible for Jesus and the disciples to have any quiet, to spend time in training, or even to eat.

**See Photo of Crowds>**

**21 But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."**

Saints, thinking Jesus had gone out of his mind, his family came to him. John recorded that Jesus’ brothers did not believe in him (John 7:5), although some later did believe (Acts 1:14).

**John 7:5**

“For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

**Acts 4:4**

“However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”

In fact, Jesus’ brother James became one of the leaders in the church in Jerusalem and the writer of the book of James. Mary believed that her son was special, but she didn’t understand his mission. Perhaps she thought the situation was getting out of hand, and she needed to protect her son from himself, from the demands of his ministry, or even from the relentless crowds. Jesus’ family decided that they needed to take him home with them.

**22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons."**

Saints, these teachers of religious law probably had been summoned by the Pharisees and Herodians who were already in league to destroy Jesus (3:6).

The teachers and Pharisees could not deny the reality of Jesus’ miracles and supernatural power—he had indeed been driving out demons. But they refused to believe that his power was from God because then they would have had to accept him as the Messiah.

Their pride would not let them do that. So in an attempt to destroy Jesus’ popularity among the people, the teachers accused him of being possessed by Satan, the prince of demons. That is why, they said, he was able to cast out demons.

**Beelzebub is the Greek form of the name Baal-zebub, a pagan Philistine god worshiped in the ancient Philistine city of Ekron during the Old Testament times.**

It is a term signifying “the lord of flies” (2 Kings 1:2).

**2 Kings 1:1-2**

1 Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. 2 Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria, and was injured; so he sent messengers and said to them, "Go, inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury."

Archaeological excavations at ancient Philistine sites have uncovered golden images of flies. After the time of the Philistines, the Jews changed the name to “Beelzeboul,” as used in the Greek New Testament, meaning “lord of dung.”

**23 So He called them to Himself 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 cannot stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end.**

Saints, Jesus first addressed their second accusation—that he was driving out demons by Satan’s power—by simply asking, “How can Satan cast out Satan?” By the question, Jesus implied that it is impossible for Satan to cast out himself (or his own followers, demons).

**Why would Satan work against himself?**

By saying that a house divided cannot stand, Jesus is illustrating the fact that success relies on congruency. This is something we see in daily life all the time. Whether it is a machine, a sports team, a government party, or one’s own mind, things have to work together if anything is to be accomplished. The Bible says that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8), and Even Paul appeals to the churches that there be no divisions among the believers (1 Corinthians 1:10).

**1 Corinthians 1:10**

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

In fact, churches should be unified in their purpose and judgment, avoiding people who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to sound doctrine (Romans 16:17).

**Romans 16:17-18**

17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Saints, Christians are not to quarrel but to be unified around a common understanding of truth.

**Psalm 133:1**

“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!”

**27 No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.**

Saints, this picture reflects a situation in the ancient world where wealthy people’s homes were virtual fortresses, and their servants could form a small army. Jesus pictured Satan as the wealthy man and his demons as his servants and possessions.

The only way those possessions could be carried off would be for someone to first tie up the strong man—the only way for the demons to be cast out is for someone to first limit Satan’s power. Satan would not do that to himself.

Although God permits Satan to work in our world, God is in control. Jesus, as God, has “tied up” Satan; Jesus is able to drive out demons and end their terrible work in people’s lives. As such, every exorcism was a binding of Satan; one day Satan will be bound forever (Revelation 20:10).

**Revelation 20:10**

“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Saints, Jesus was not in league with Satan, as the teachers of the law tried to claim; rather, he had overpowered Satan by refusing his temptations and by constantly freeing people held in Satan’s grasp—either through demon possession or through the power of sin.

**28 "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; 29 but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"—30 because they said, "He has an unclean spirit."**

First he made the incredible promise that any sin can be forgiven, including blasphemy. Too often people miss this promise and worry about the warning in the next verse. But the fact is, those who believe in Jesus will be forgiven of all sins (evil acts, wrong actions, good actions not done, evil thoughts, evil motives, etc.) and of all blasphemies (evil words said against God).

Secondly when there is confession and repentance, no sin is beyond God’s forgiveness.

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

There is one sin, however, that cannot be forgiven. Anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit refers not so much to a single action or word as to an attitude. Those who defiantly deny Jesus’ divine power and instead attribute it to Satan are blaspheming the Holy Spirit (see also Matthew 12:32).

**Matthew 12:31-32**

31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

Saints, Jesus was not talking about rejecting him, but of rejecting the power behind him. Jewish history tells us that Jesus’ generation acknowledged that he performed miracles but that he did it by the power of the devil. Thus, the Jewish leaders rejected him as being the Messiah and thereby blasphemed the Holy Spirit.

Jesus’ words were addressed directly to these teachers of religious law because they were saying he had an evil spirit. They had blasphemed the Spirit by attributing the power by which Christ did miracles to Satan instead of to the Holy Spirit. This is the unforgivable sin—the deliberate refusal to acknowledge God’s power in Christ.

It indicates an irreversible hardness of heart. Deliberate, ongoing rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit is blasphemy because it is rejecting God himself.

The religious leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy, but ironically they were the guilty ones when they looked Jesus in the face and accused him of being possessed by Satan.

Sometimes believers worry that they have accidentally committed this unforgivable sin. But only those who have turned their back on God and rejected all faith have any need to worry. Jesus said they can’t be forgiven—not because their sin is worse than any other, but because they will never ask for forgiveness.

**31 Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. 32 And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You." 33 But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?"**

Saints, apparently Mary had gathered her family, and they went to find Jesus. Mary hoped to use her personal relationship with Jesus to influence him. She saw her son occupied in a busy ministry that was taking its toll on him—to the point that he had no time to eat.

They arrived at the house but could not get in. So they stood outside and sent their message in to Jesus. Obviously Jesus’ family thought that their relationship with him precluded all others and that he would immediately answer their request.

Instead of immediately going outside to see what his family members wanted, Jesus looked at the crowd and asked an odd question, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” Jesus knew why his family had come, and he wasn’t about to be dragged home because they thought he’d gone crazy.

So he used their visit as a lesson in discipleship. A relationship with Jesus is not limited to those in his immediate family. Jesus opened this relationship to all people.

**34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."**

Saints, Jesus looked at those seated around him (not the entire crowd, but probably his disciples who were seated closest to him) and answered his own question. The types of people who can have a relationship with him are those who listen, learn, believe, and follow. In these words, “These are my mother and brothers,” Jesus explained that in his spiritual family, the relationships are ultimately more important and longer lasting than those formed in his physical family.

The key to discipleship in Mark’s Gospel is radical obedience to God’s will. While Jesus looked upon his disciples seated around him as members of his family, he broadened the scope to include anyone who does God’s will.

Jesus was not denying his responsibility to his earthly family. On the contrary, he was criticizing the religious leaders for not following the Old Testament command to honor their parents (Matthew 15:1-9).

**Matthew 15:1-9**

1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, 2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? 4 For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 5 But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"—

6 then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. 7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 8'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "

He provided for his mother’s security as he hung on the cross

**John 19:25-27**

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" 27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

His mother and brothers were present in the upper room at Pentecost (Acts 1:14).

**Acts 1:14**

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”

Saints, instead, Jesus was pointing out that spiritual relationships are as binding as physical ones, and he was paving the way for a new community of believers to be formed as Jesus’ spiritual family. This family would be characterized by love; the members should desire to be together, work together, and share one another’s’ burdens

**Let’s Pray**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**