

The Real Jesus, Mark 3:7-35, "Hometown Hero?", 1/30/22

We have been asking the question throughout this series, **Are you following the REAL JESUS?** And we are going to continue to ask it until you are all thorough tired of the question because it is infinitely more important of question than what's going to happen in the next election cycle, should I be investing in Crypto or where are we going out to lunch today. It's the most important question any of us can ask. We have been focusing on the REAL JESUS part, of the question, but now we want to emphasize the **ARE YOU FOLLOWING, the Real Jesus?** In our Scripture today in Mark 3, we will meet four groups of people that are around Jesus, but only one of them is actually following Jesus. These same four groups exist today, even within the church. Mission- To introduce people to Jesus Christ and help them follow him. See it's possible to be around Jesus, around his people, speaking the language and yet, not actually following. And so as we meet these four groups be asking yourself which group most describes your relationship with Jesus. Let's pick up the story.

⁷ Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed.

Remember last week, Mark showed us a series of 5 conflicts that Jesus had with the religious leaders. Tensions are really starting to heat up, and so Jesus says, "You know, it's time for a change of scenery, let's go to the lake." You know those Southwest commercials, where a guy makes a bunch of people angry and then it says, "Wanna get away?" Well this is Jesus, except it is not because he made an embarrassing gaffe or is fearful, but because his final showdown with the religious leaders would come on the cross and it wasn't time for that yet.

⁸ When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. Here we meet our first group that is around Jesus, we will call them **His Fans**. What do we notice about the fans? Well they came for the show- before Netflix, gaming, NFL- they came to see what the buzz was all about, they came because there was a miracle-worker and they wanted a miracle, a healing, relief...And the crowds were massive. ***⁹ Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. ¹⁰ For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.***

And what a scene it was- ***¹¹ Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." ¹² But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him.*** Jesus is performing healings, Jesus is calling out demons, shutting them up and the crowd is just worked up into such a frenzy they are surging toward Jesus so much so he has to get into a boat to prevent a stampede, everyone wants a piece of Jesus. What is revealing as we continue to read in the gospels, most of these fans were fickle...when the heat was turned up, when he told them things they didn't want to hear and when becoming associated with him became risky, they scattered, some even turning on him. Some of them were there for a miracle, and once they got what they wanted, they were gone. Fan ask the question, **"What can Jesus do for me?"**

²⁰ Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. ²¹ When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." So we have met his fans, now we meet a second group, **His Family**. Now we know that Jesus had at least 4 brothers, some sisters are unnamed, cousins and his parents. His family grew up with him, they knew the prophecies, that had even seen miracles. But here we find them questioning what Jesus is doing, wondering if he has lost his mind and attempting to control him. What do we make of this? I think what we have here is that His family, at least his mother, may have believed that he was the Messiah, but Jesus was not being the kind of Messiah they expected and wanted. No, no- Jesus you are supposed to be making friends with the Pharisees? Shouldn't you be in Jerusalem planning the overthrow of the Roman empire? Why are you hanging with a bunch of sick, nobodies by the lake? I don't know exactly but they were trying to control Jesus to make him fit into their expectations and accomplish their agenda. Want to know **"How can I control Jesus?"**

²² And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." Here we encounter our 3rd group- **His Foes**. We have already met this group. We know that they are motivated to denigrate and eventually eliminate Jesus, any means necessary. And so how do they explain these miracles? Well it must be Beelzebul, Jesus must be a spawn of Satan. What slander! Now the almost comical irony that Mark is showing us is that while the religious leaders should be the first to recognize who Jesus is they get it completely wrong and it's actual the demons who get it right back in v.11! Their hearts are so callous, motivated by control, fear, resentment that they are willfully ignorant to spiritual realities.

Now Jesus could have struck them mute, he could have fired slander back to them, instead refutes them by using logic and story and show them who he really is. ²³ So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

²⁵ If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. Jesus peels back the veneer of the brick and mortar world to reveal the deeper realities in the unseen, spiritual world at war. He says this world is actually dominated by evil empire, by a warlord- Satan, who has the world held captive in their sin. Why would Satan turn the gun on his own troops? Good question! But then Jesus shows us what character he is in the story. ²⁷ In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house. Jesus is saying, "I've come to overthrow the warlord. I'm mightier than he is. Hebrews uses this battle language- that Jesus disarmed Satan through the cross. And when Jesus takes over the kingdom he sets the captives free. Every one of us who come to Jesus in faith go from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the light of Jesus.

But his Foes refuse to see who Jesus really is. **"How can I dismiss Jesus?"** And to this he responds with a solemn warning.

²⁸ Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.”³⁰ He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.” Many people get caught up with what is often called the “unpardonable sin.” The fear is that they may have committed it and can’t be forgiven. Is it adultery? Is it divorce? Suicide? All things I’ve heard. But we miss what Jesus says, “People can be forgiven for all sins!” That’s the point! Jesus tells us it is blasphemy against the Spirit that is unforgivable. The Spirit’s primary role is to testify that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the World. What is unpardonable is the dismissing of Jesus’ true identity. He told these same religious leaders this directly in **John 8:24 I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.** Anyone who dismisses Jesus as Savior will die in their sins. Jesus stands at the door and knocks- if you sense the Spirit calling you to Jesus, don’t dismiss him, we don’t know how many more opportunities you will get.

And so we have glimpses of His Fans, His Family, His Foes, in the middle of all of these groups around Jesus, Mark gives us a cut scene that isn’t in chronological order, it actually seems like it’s out of place in the flow of the story but I think it is intentional. He cuts to a scene on a mountainside **v.¹³ Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. ¹⁴ He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and to have authority to drive out demons.** Mark is showing us the contrast between all these other groups and **His True Followers**. The fans are trying to use Jesus to get something from him. His family is trying to control him to get him on their own agenda, his foes are trying to destroy him...really what Jesus wants is to call true followers. Notice the distinction of these followers- called a relationship and a mission with Jesus. Fans want to know “What Jesus can do FOR me?”, but True Followers will ask, **“What can Jesus do through me?”**.

We get one more glimpse of these True Followers at the end of this section in a surprising contrast with His Family. **³¹ Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”**

³³ “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked. ³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

This would have been shocking in any culture, but especially in a Hebrew culture, where family was so sacred. Now maybe this sounds harsh to you. But Jesus isn’t telling us that family doesn’t matter. Jesus even gave his mother to be cared for by John while on the cross. His brother James became a prominent figure in the early church. We are pro-family. However, the blood of Jesus that unites the spiritual family of God is far thicker than our biological family. And might I add it is thicker blood than our style preferences, racial/cultural profiles, our political alliances. Jesus came to unite a true family together through his blood. And who does Jesus say are his family? Whoever does God’s will. What does it mean to do God’s will? This is the very question that the Jews asked him in **John 6 ²⁸ Then they asked him, “What must we do**

to do the works God requires?” ²⁹ *Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”* First and foremost doing God’s will means that we believe that Jesus is the Messiah, savior from my sins. This is what makes us true family with Jesus. And when we become part of Jesus’ family we begin to open up our lives in surrender to his will for our lives.

Now this is as far as we want to go in the story because we want to turn the evaluation onto our own lives. As you consider these four groups, which most describes you today? **His Foes-** Likely everyone would be quick to say, “That’s not me, I never called Jesus the spawn of Satan like those guys, next...” Not so fast. What was it that ultimately characterized this group? It was rejection of the Real Jesus- Son of God and Savior. Today it might sound like this- “Jesus was a prophet, but not the Son of God.” “Jesus was a good teacher of peace and love, but He’s the Savior of the world.” “Jesus is good for those who have lots of weaknesses, but I’ve got my life under control, so I don’t really see a need for him.” These are all versions of the unpardonable sin of dismissing Jesus’ true identity. And if we that to our grave we will die in our sins, apart from God.

His Family- Like his family, today there are many who try to control Jesus, co-opt Jesus for their own agenda and expectations. Many are busy trying to get Jesus to do our will rather than us doing Jesus’ will. There are the more obvious ways in some Christian circles- movements that attempt to control Jesus through the power of positive thinking and prayers- if I pray using a certain formula, certain words, with these prophecies I can force Jesus to bless my life or manifest certain destinies. health-wealth-prosperity theology and word-of-faith. But there are also more subtle ways we can be tempted toward this. Now Jesus, you are supposed to be giving me a spouse. Jesus, why haven’t you fixed my marriage yet? Jesus, you should be giving me a promotion instead of that guy. There are many angry Christians throughout this pandemic, who are really resenting God for allowing this to continue and messing up their agenda. Are you willing to follow a Jesus you can’t control? Who is more about his agenda of holiness than your agenda of happiness?

His Fans.

“The biggest threat to the church today is fans who call themselves Christians but aren’t actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from them. Fans want Jesus to inspire them, but Jesus wants to interfere with their lives.”-Kyle Idleman

There are many fans of Jesus today, in his research, 75% of so-called Christians. Fans and Followers may appear the same on the outside. They both might go to church, sing and praise Jesus, they both might know information about him, both might have a Jesus fish on their cars. But when the heat is turned up- when following Jesus gets difficult at work, when they aren’t getting the miracle, when everything isn’t awesome, when they are confronted with a truth that you don’t like, or called to surrender an idol in their lives- A fan may stop going to church, find a new one that doesn’t know their stuff, they will reinterpret the Bible or justify their sin or just ignore what Jesus says and play the Christian game. Because at the end of the day, they aren’t after the heart of Jesus, they aren’t surrendered to Jesus, they want him for his stuff.

His True Followers

They don't dismiss Jesus' identity they Embrace Jesus as Savior and Lord. They aren't trying to control Jesus for their own agenda, they are surrendered to Jesus' agenda. They aren't just after what Jesus can do for them, but what Jesus wants to do through them. His Foes, His family, His Fans all say in one way or another- "My will be done." But his true followers say "Thy will be done." Thy will be done in my life, in our church, in our world. Now we aren't going to do this perfectly, we are going to fall woefully short at times. It's not about getting it perfect it's about living surrendered. Maybe that's overwhelming to you. After all, where do I start? What area of your life is the Holy Spirit whispering for you to say "Thy will be done." Use connection card.