

Mark 3:20-35

[Jesus went home;] 20 and the crowd came together again, so that [Jesus and the disciples] could not even eat. 21 When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, *for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.”* 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.” 23 And he called them to him, and spoke 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 will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. 27 But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

28 “Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”—30 for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

31 Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.” 33 And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Is Jesus “out of his mind?” Is Jesus a crazy person?

How do you define “crazy”?

Here, in the Bible, just a few chapters into Mark’s story about Jesus, there are people around him are saying he’s crazy.

People around Jesus are calling him, “out of his mind” which is strong language.

- It’s a way of discrediting people,
- of dismissing their views and actions,
- of trying to limit, if not destroy, their credibility and influence.
- It’s the kind of thing that you either say in jest to a good friend (“Don’t be crazy, we could never do that!”)
- or to – and, honestly, more frequently *about* – someone you really don’t like (“Don’t listen to him – the guy is just plain crazy”).

People are saying this about Jesus. And they’re not just saying it here and there, occasionally, or under their breaths. No, they’re saying it out loud, in public, and even to his own family. Not only that, but his family seems to buy it. They are moved to action because “people were saying,” as Mark notes, “He has gone out of his mind” (v.21).

What do you think about the actions of your brother Jesus? Are they the actions of a crazy person?



- Jesus is healing anyone and everyone in need and casting out demons and doing all this even on the Sabbath.
- He is breaking the rules to make sure everyone can experience God's grace.

All of which sounds pretty good. So why are folks saying he's lost his mind?

Think about it: In Jesus' act of wild abandon and extreme inclusion, to the point of defying religious norms, he is shaking up the people around him, particularly but not exclusively the religious authorities, and he is doing it on two fronts:

First, he's defying norms about who's in and who's out. Folks possessed by a demon, those maimed or born with some physical limitation or defect – these kinds of people were often assumed to be cursed, to be not natural, or to have sinned (or to be suffering from the sins of their parents – see John 9:1-2). Yet Jesus forgives and heals *all* who are in need. Everyone. No exceptions. And, just in case folks weren't sure about this before, Jesus will soon push his point unbelievably and quite literally home when he says any and all who do the will of God are his true brothers and sisters and mother, radically redefining what constitutes a family in an age when family was everything.

Second, and moreover, he's putting the need of the people he encounters above the religious traditions that regulate the lives of the people. Make no mistake: these religious traditions are important, useful, and valuable, but they are a means to an experience of God and greater abundance in life, not an end in themselves.

When we put following the rules ahead of meeting need, we've actually, even if accidentally, misused the very rules God gave us to help us flourish.

This is why Jesus is called crazy.

And this is why those who follow him today are sometimes called crazy as well. Because, quite frankly,

- it sounds kind of crazy these days to invite everyone into our community without background checks, metal detectors, or security.
- And it may sound crazy to put the integrity of families, even immigrant families, above "border security."
- And it's definitely crazy to declare forgiveness for all our sins each week.
- It's probably even more crazy to say that God loves everyone the same. This just isn't how the quid pro quo world works.

And yet it's what Jesus does and calls those who follow him to do as well.

Perhaps the craziest – and most disturbing thing – about Jesus' actions, is that they took away (robbed, if you will) the ability for people to judge and fence in (or out) and define those people around us by how they conform to our expectations, NOT God's expectations.

In fact, what we discover over and over again is that anytime we draw a line between who's in and who's out, we discover that Jesus is on the other side, identifying with them, caring for them, and loving them...just as he loves us.



He did pay a price for this craziness. Those who were upset by his radical embrace and outlandish love did conspire, threaten, and eventually entrap and crucify him.

But none of that deterred him. He did die unjustly in order to demonstrate God's crazy love.

And on the third day, God did raise him from the dead. Which may just mean that the cross has next to nothing to do with paying some price, or being punished in our stead, or satisfying God's justice, but rather is the example of just how far we will go to get rid of those who witness to God's expansive and all-encompassing love, and the resurrection is ultimately the testimony that that kind of love can simply not be stopped, not even by extreme violence, and so will eventually conquer all.

It's a crazy and crucified messiah we follow, and sometimes it takes more than a little nerve to live his message. Thanks for having the courage and grace to do so...even and especially when it feels a little crazy.

