

“He is Out of His Mind”

Mark 3:13-34

Jesus was developing a mission as he was establishing the Kingdom of God. The central theme of his preaching, since the beginning of his ministry was, “The Kingdom of heaven has come near.” So the announcement of the kingdom sounded loud and clear since the Israelites understood that this mission was viable through the twelve tribes.



Surprisingly, while preaching, Jesus went to the mountaintop to call his disciples and appoint them in just the same way Israel was constituted as a nation by God, at Mount Sinai, centuries before. Observers would interpret Jesus' action as if he was creating a new Israel and a new family of God. His actions could very well be viewed as a change or substitution; or more likely, a revolution against the Jewish tradition. Jesus' family concluded that, “he was out of his mind.” In addition, the teachers of the Law inferred that Jesus was the prince of demons. In other words, Jesus was mentally ill to his family, and Satan's personification to the others

Questions:

What do you suppose were the intentions of these people? How did Jesus respond to these two accusations?

One might tend to agree with Jesus' family in believing that he was out of his mind. By choosing the twelve, he was telling his relatives that he was about to embrace a new family in order to establish his new “Kingdom of God.” This idea was not a reality for the present world. Hallucinations, deliriums, or even brain damage could make individuals think in that way. Jesus' family needed to do something immediately. They needed to stop the madness. Mary and her children were ashamed and humiliated. For this reason, they stood outside the house where Jesus was, and spoke out in an effort to stop Jesus' irrational vision and mission. Sadly, with their harsh words, Jesus' dignity was denied.

When the religious leaders from Jerusalem heard of Jesus' mission to set up a “new Kingdom,” they sent teachers of the law to convince both his followers, and the public in general, that Israel would remain, much as God intended from the beginning. They suggested that people were sticking to Jesus like the flies held on to Beelzebub, the Lord of the Flies. The only explanation they found for Jesus' authority over demons was that he was their prince. Their strategy was to discredit his purity. If Jesus was demon possessed, his actions were worthless. However, the teachers of the Law didn't realize that with their words, they were offending his disciples and followers as well.

In response, Jesus showed the inconsistency of their insults. First of all, it wasn't logical that Satan would fight against himself and his own. That would be evidence of a divided kingdom at risk of collapsing. The same principle applied to his nation. If Israel were divided, “Its end has already come,” Jesus said. But it was not true, according to Jesus, and to Israel's history.

Then, Jesus exposed the purpose of their insults. The teachers were trying to trip him up with his own words, and in his own house, in order to distract his followers. In addition, his family had similar intentions of distracting his followers and getting them to leave the house where they

were gathered. Even though the teachers of the law blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, people stood in favor of Jesus because he countered their insults and accusations in an articulate and apologetic manner, with great wisdom.

At this point in the story, Jesus' family was unaware of his defense as they stood at the door waiting for him to come out. His followers were anxiously awaiting his actions. Would Jesus go back to his family or would he continue forward with his "new kingdom?" People inside the house were comforted to hear Jesus' determined answer, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and my sister and mother." (Mark 3:34). This is the new family and the kingdom of God.

Questions:

Today, individuals and families around us are lost - in their minds, their prejudices, their addictions, fears and unfaithfulness. How can we respond to this "lostness" by following Jesus' testimony?

Is there a family member of whom we may be ashamed or embarrassed by? How can we protect their dignity even if we don't understand them?

We have been witnesses of persecution against others. Children and youth have been victims of bullying at school. Adults have suffered "persecution" when their leadership has been diminished in church, at their work, in their families, etc. Elderly people often live in isolation because of their age and other issues. *How can we stand for them with the power of the Holy Spirit, instead of letting them suffer those injustices?*

Discuss how you can stand up for your Christian faith within your church, community, school, or family.

Prayer:

Almighty and loving Parent, we praise you for Jesus' strength to stand in our behalf. We adore you for making us part of your family and kingdom. Forgive our tendency to ignore persecution and suffering of our neighbors as many did in your time. Close our mouths when we are tempted to insult your name and offend our loved ones and neighbors. Strengthen us to step out to do your will, not ours. For the glory of your name, we pray. Amen.