Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus: Liar, Lunatic, or Lord?
Scripture: Mark 3:20-35
Code: 41-15

I was saying to someone the other day that I'm not sure that it is nearly as important for you that I preach as it is for me that I preach. This is the passion of my life, the joy of my life. And for the privilege of preparation itself if I never preached, I would give everything in this world because there's no joy like the joy of digging deep into the discovery of the truth revealed in Scripture and especially when it has to do with the most compelling person of all, the incarnate God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus we find ourselves again in a gospel and it is now the gospel of Mark and I invite you to take your Bible and if you will, open your Bible to Mark chapter 3...Mark chapter 3. We're going to be looking at the last section of Mark chapter 3 verses 20 through verse 35. It's a prolonged section and it's a story within a story. So we're going to have to split it into two weeks. I would have to let you know that this week will be, in some ways, the simpler of the two and next week, perhaps, the more challenging and the more compelling and the more stunning teaching. But these are two very important portions of Scripture that are blended together by Mark in a unique way as a story within a story.

Many of you will be familiar with the name C.S. Lewis. C.S. Lewis, the great writer, the great thinker, the great Christian apologist has written many, many things that all of us are very, very familiar with. And in his effort at apologetics, he came up with a paradigm that has probably become somewhat well known, maybe it's more widely known even then its author, namely C.S. Lewis.

Lewis was concerned that there were too many people who were saying about Jesus that He was a good teacher, that He was a noble, moral leader, that He was a religious revolutionary that He was a man of immense compassion and great wisdom, and there were many people in his time, as there always have been and there certainly are today, who want to throw all kinds of laurels at Jesus and all kinds of accolades and paint Him as this nice and noble and compassionate and kind insightful exceptional teacher. C.S. Lewis was convinced that that is one option that is not possible...that is not possible. That is not a possible consideration of Jesus, he said. He could not be a good man, He could not be a moral man, He could not be a religious teacher, He could not be a trustworthy leader, He could not be wise, He could not be a spiritual mentor only because of one very important matter and it is this, He claimed to be God. And as soon as He claimed to be God, He eliminated Himself from that category because good people, wise people, sensible people don't think they're God and they don't want you to think they're God. Jesus has even been deemed by many people as very humble, meek and mild.

Well humility is not compatible with declaring that you're the God of the universe, that you're the Creator, that you have been alive eternally, that you made everything that is in existence and that you are the final judge of everyone and you will reign over everything forever and ever. As soon as Jesus declared that He was God the Son, that He had the same nature as God, as soon as He said if you have seen Me, you've seen God, it was no longer possible, said C.S. Lewis to simply designate Him as a good teacher. That is not open as an option. Good, sensible, wise men don't make such outrageous claims.

C.S. Lewis then said, "One of three things is true," and you will remember this, "He is either a lunatic on the level of somebody who thinks He's a poached egg, or He is a liar at such a calculated and clever and extreme level as to probably be unequaled as a purveyor of deception, or He is Lord. But...said Lewis...forget the patronizing nonsense that He's a good teacher, that's not an option.

Now I can't be sure about it, but I have a sneaky suspicion that C.S. Lewis may have discovered that paradigm in Mark 3 because of all things in this passage, in verse 21 Jesus' family calls Him a lunatic. In verse 22 the scribes, the religious leaders, say He's possessed by Beelzebul and thus they call Him a liar who claims to be from God but, in fact, is from Satan. While on the other hand, finally, the testimony of the Holy Spirit down in verse 29, of course, is implied and the testimony of the Holy Spirit is He is Lord of all.

So those are the options. So if you came to church today and you think you have an acceptable view of Jesus, and you're here to give Him some honor as a good teacher, as a great religious leader, as a righteous man, you don't have that option. You've got to join one of these three categories.

Now the New Testament is written clearly to make it obvious to any reader that Jesus is not a lunatic. Lunatics don't heal sick people, raise dead people and dominate demons. Lunatics don't speak the way Jesus spoke, think the way He thought. Lunatics don't act the way He acted. Lunatics don't attract women and children. Lunatics aren't marked by kindness and mercy and compassion.

Nor is Jesus a liar. Nor is He the cleverest of all deceivers because liars don't raise dead people either. Frauds don't heal sick people, don't banish disease from a nation for a duration of three years. Frauds don't dominate the world of demons either, and neither do frauds die and having been buried come out of the grave.

So really we're left with one alternative with regard to Jesus, unless you want to join those who think He's a lunatic, or those who think He's the greatest liar of all time. You're left with one option and that is the option that He is who He claimed to be. That He is God, the evidence is in, virgin born, sinless life, power over the physical world, power over the spiritual world, power over life, power over death, power over creation. Clearly He is Lord.

In order to make this testimony unmistakably clear, the Holy Spirit ordained that there would be four testaments given for the purpose of declaring the deity of Christ...Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. All four writers have the same purpose they write so that you may believe that Jesus is God, that He is God the Son and believing might have life in His name. But the reason you want to get the right view of Christ is because it's the only path to salvation, otherwise you die and go to hell forever and suffer forever.

So Mark basically has the same purpose that John states in John 20:31, he writes, "That you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God," and he tips that as his purpose in the first statement of Mark 1:1, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I'm going to tell you about the one who was and is the Son of God.

Now we're in to chapter 3, the end of chapter 3. We're well into the ministry of Jesus. He began His ministry about 30 years of age so He's been around for all those years, decades. He launches His ministry in Judea with the cleansing of the temple, has months of ministry in the south in Judea and then goes to Galilee and He has a long ministry in Galilee, probably extending over a year. We're well into that now, into that Galilean ministry. Jesus has begun to basically obliterate illness from the land of Palestine, the land of Israel. He has complete power and dominance over demons against their will. It should be clear to the people that are watching that He is in fact one who demonstrates the power of God and the people are starting to think that, although they are shy of actually confessing it. If you go back to chapter 2 and verse 12, after Jesus had healed the man who was paralyzed, who came down through the roof, it says they were all amazed and were glorifying God. Clearly from the standpoint of the people, there was no other explanation for this than that God was acting through Christ. Not to say that He is God, in fact, but to say that certainly He comes with the power of God. That was the most reasonable explanation.

We would have to conclude then that the crowds had at least a step on His family who thought He was a lunatic. And they had a whole lot on the leaders who thought He was satanic. However, as far as we are into the life and the ministry of Jesus, when we come to the third chapter of Mark, we don't yet have any human testimony to faith. We don't have anything yet in which a person says, "I believe that You are the Son of God," which is the reason why Mark is writing. The evidence is in, there's plenty of it, enough of it. We don't have that testimony from any human being. We do have it from two others. We have the testimony of God the Father in chapter 1 verse 11 at the baptism. God speaks out of heaven, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And we have the testimony of a demon in chapter 1 verse 24 who says, "We know who You are, the Holy One of God." The supernatural world is super clear on who He is, but we don't have any human confession of Jesus as the Son of God. In fact, you're not going to have one until the fifteenth chapter and the thirty-ninth verse, almost at the very end of Mark's gospel, at the cross. And that testimony is not going to be given by a Jew, that's going to be given by a Roman centurion who after seeing Jesus

crucified said, "Truly this was the Son of God."

Well it is true in chapter 8, the disciples, Peter being the spokesman, did say, "You are the Christ, You are the Messiah." Mark leaves it at that, messianic recognition. I guess the sad reality and yet the reality is that in the ministry of Jesus as powerful as it was, as He banished illness and banished demons, showed His power over the created world, the physical world and His power over the created supernatural world, people did not come from the experience of seeing that evidence firsthand to faith, their hearts were so dark and so hard.

In John chapter 12, there is a statement in verse 37, "Though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him." That was the case. One could certainly understand if you know the New Testament why this is true because the heart is so dark and so blind and so dead that it cannot respond...it cannot respond.

Many of the rulers, says John 12:42, believed in Him. In other words, they knew He was from God...they saw it. "But because of the Pharisees, they were not confessing Him for fear they would be put out of the synagogue for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God."

So internally their hearts were dark and externally there was a lot of religious pressure. We would think that by the time you get to Mark chapter 3 and this explosion of miracles has happened that there would be a mass of people who were following Jesus. The truth of the matter is, after His resurrection when He came back to Galilee and He appeared to the believers in Galilee, how many were there? Five hundred...five hundred. And when the Holy Spirit came in the upper room in Jerusalem, how many were gathered? A hundred and twenty. It's an amazing story. The evidence is piling up and piling up and piling up and people are slow to make the obvious conclusion and to make the consequent confession that He is God, that He is Lord.

Let's look at the first option is that He is a lunatic. It's a possibility. It is a possibility. I'm always amazed that lunatics like to say they're God and they like to say they're Jesus. I don't think I've ever seen one say he's Buddha, have you? I don't think I've ever heard a lunatic claim to be Mohammed, or Baal, or some other god. But they all want to be Jesus. It shouldn't be too hard to figure out why cause that's the one name that Satan wants to corrupt.

Maybe Jesus was just, I don't know, like Charles Manson, complete lunatic. That's a possibility. The reason he thinks he's God is because he can't think, like the guy in the mental institution lying in bed saying, "I'm Napoleon, I'm Napoleon, I'm Napoleon."

And the guy in the next bed says, "Who told you that?"

He said, "God did."

The guy said, "Oh no I didn't."

We understand that kind of non-thinking. Was Jesus somebody on the level of a man who thinks he's a poached egg, whose irrational? Not hardly. His mind was the most pure, perfect, His articulations were the most profound. No one ever spoke like He spoke. No one ever heard anything from anybody ever the way they heard things from Him...profound, pure, divine reason.

And of all things, His family thinks He's a lunatic. Look at verse 20. He came home, literally came...He came to a house, came to a house. This is not to suggest that He came back to Nazareth. He has made His headquarters in Capernaum. Oh He had a little occasion in Nazareth, you might remember it in the fourth chapter of Luke it is recorded. He went to His hometown Nazareth and they had heard so much about Him and about His miracle powers and the miracles He had done over in Capernaum, they asked Him to be the teacher, to speak on the Sabbath and He picked up the Scripture and He read about the acceptable year of the Lord and He read about how the gospel is going to come and it's going to be preached to the poor, prisoners, blind and oppressed, etc., etc...a messianic passage. And then He said, "Today this is fulfilled in your ears. I'm here. I am the fulfillment of messianic prophecy." And then He indicted them for their unbelief and hypocrisy and sin, and this is in His own town in Nazareth in the synagogue where He grew up and attended through His entire life until He left at the age of 30. And after that one sermon, they tried to throw Him off a cliff and kill Him.

So Nazareth was not a happy place for Him to stay. Capernaum was where He set up His Galilean headquarters. A house...what house, I don't know. There's been one house mentioned in chapter 1 verse 29 as Peter's house. Perhaps Peter's house is the focal point and perhaps Peter's house was the one they dismantled the roof and let down the paralytic in chapter 2 and maybe this is Peter's house again. We don't know that for sure. But He comes to a house and the crowd gathered again. They are relentless now. They're relentless because they can't get enough miracles. They can't get enough of the entertainment that comes from these miracles. They can't get enough of the benefit that comes to them from the miracles.

They...they...they come if they're sick, they come if they're possessed, they come with the people they know, with the family members and friends who have those issues and they want healings and they want deliverances and they know Jesus has the power to do it. There's nothing like this. I mean, rabbis had followings. It was basically the way it worked. You know, you were a rabbi, you had a little coterie of people that kind of floated your little flock around with you as you taught them and mentored them.

Well Jesus' crowds were massive. There had never been a rabbi ever who had these kinds of crowds, but there never had been a rabbi who could do what He did. So the crowd gets large. The

crowd gets demanding. The crowd gets aggressive. The crowd becomes an obstacle. The crowd becomes a hindrance. And that's what we see in verse 20. The crowd is so big and so unruly that they can't even eat a meal. Jesus can't get away from the crowd. He can't even have enough downtime to nourish His own body and neither can the disciples who are with Him. And you know by now He's collected the Twelve, identified them in the prior passage and the others who are His followers. They are a threat to Him. They're a threat to His safety. They're a threat to His well-being. They're a threat to His life. This is a serious issue, tens of thousands of people drawn by His miracle power.

Now on this particular occasion, there's a parallel passage to this passage, it's in Matthew chapter 12. And in that passage there's a healing and it's a healing of a man who was possessed by a demon, who was consequently or at the same time deaf and dumb and blind. This is a demon-possessed Helen Keller person, the most terrible of tragic humans and Jesus delivers the man from the demon, fully heals the man. That in itself, that kind of massive miracle would have swelled the crowd. That would be the kind of miracle Jesus did. They're creative miracles. Creative miracles being that He gave functioning ears to people who had non-functioning ears. He gave eyes that could see to people who had eyes that could not see. They were all creative miracles...all instantaneous miracles. He enabled people who had been paralyzed to walk instantaneously like the man in chapter 2, who picked up his bed and walked, even though he hadn't walked. These are creative miracles. You get legs that function, fully function. Each of those creative miracles was something like the creation of Adam...fully functioning instantaneously.

Well the crowd is, of course, pickled by scribes and Pharisees who are doing all they can to discredit Jesus. Matthew 12, the parallel passage to this that tells the same account, mentions the Pharisees. This passage, verse 22, mentions the scribes, but most of the scribes were Pharisees and they were both there. The mob then is really overpowering. It's so overpowering that Jesus can't function. And this is knowledge that comes back to His family, comes back to His family...they're in Nazareth, they're just not a long walk away and they are beginning to be concerned about Him. Probably Mary is concerned about Him. His half brothers and half sisters who were the children of Joseph and Mary, they're concerned about Him. So it tells us in verse 21, "When His own people heard...when His own people," literally a prepositional phrase, "When those of His," generally referring to family. "When His family heard, they went out to take custody of Him." The verb for "custody" is a verb that means to seize. It's used fifteen times in the gospel of Mark, eight of those times of seizing Jesus, including arresting Him. It's also used of the seizure of John the Baptist when He was taken and imprisoned to be beheaded. They really wanted to go and rescue Him and seize Him, if you will, kind of arrest Him and get Him away from the threatening crowd. They were convinced that He had brought it upon Himself for they were saying, "He has lost His senses."

What does the family think of Jesus? They think He's a lunatic. That's not very good thinking. Did Mary think that? Of course not. Mary knew exactly who He was. The angel told her before He was

born, right? He'll be the Son of the Most High, the Holy Child. She knew she was a virgin. She knew He was her Savior, that's her Magnificat. She knew. But Mary pondered all these things, kept them in her heart. And whatever she might have said to the rest of the kids who were born to Joseph and Mary, they didn't believe it. Surely somewhere along the line Mary had said to them, "By the way, your brother whom you think so odd is in fact God."

The holy child...and Joseph, your father, was not His father. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

They didn't believe it. They didn't buy it. John chapter 7 verse 5 says, "They didn't believe in Him. They were not believing in Him." You can just imagine what family life was like with a perfect child in the mix. A perfect child would be alienated, ostracized, labeled odd, strange. Because He was perfect, not in the sense of just innocent, but perfect in the sense of being righteous, every comment He ever made would be perfect, every response would be perfect...something none of you parents have ever even come close to experiencing. Every reaction to what anybody did would be perfect. Everything would be exactly the right thing to do and do it in the right way with absolutely the right attitude. That would be a formula for complete alienation from a pile of sinful siblings.

He drew no attention to Himself in those 30 years. He grew up in Nazareth with those half brothers and sisters. Joseph now is dead. In the 30 years that Jesus was growing up, before He began His ministry, others were born. The New Testament tells us He had brothers and sisters. And in Mark chapter 6, it even names some of them. Verse 3 of chapter 6 it says that He's the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon and are not His sisters here with us? So much for the perpetual virginity of Mary. Mary was not a perpetual virgin. She and Joseph had a whole family full of children. The New Testament is crystal clear about that.

And growing up with Him, they would have seen His perfection. It would be inescapable. But He doesn't really...as He's growing up...doesn't act in God-like ways, that is He doesn't create anything. He doesn't go into the shop where they're making a table and saying, "The easy way to do this is 'Table!'" He doesn't do that. He doesn't hold classes. He doesn't teach theology. And so, I think the best that could be said was the family probably thought of Him, at least the siblings, as odd. They definitely didn't believe in Him. Scripture makes it clear, John 7:5, "They were not believing in Him."

And now, this very odd child, this child whom they cannot relate, to whom they cannot connect, the One whose very present sat in righteous judgment on every childlike sin they ever committed has gone over the edge. He has now lost His mind. He is now declaring Himself to be God. He is now proclaiming that He has supernatural powers and He's going to get Himself killed because He's literally creating a stampede coming right at Him. And so, they decide maybe the best thing to do is to rescue Him...to rescue Him before His lunatic conduct cost Him His life, or...for that matter...brings further embarrassment on the family. Believe it, they didn't think He was just a good teacher, just a spiritual mentor, some especially wise rabbi who had developed in the months since He had been

gone from the family. They thought He was absolutely out of His mind and they went to seize Him because He had lost His senses.

By the way, the term there, berserk, insane, lunatic, you can use any of those language...English language words. But the actual Greek, He's lost His senses, is the verb that means to stand outside oneself. We would use in the vernacular the phrase, "He's beside himself," which is simply a way of saying He's not in control any longer. The conclusion is He's a madman. It's really...it is really a mad conclusion. It's a lunatic conclusion because what evidence in His 30 years of growing up in the family was there that He was a madman, that He was irrational, illogical, insane, detached from reality? None. And now the fact of the matter is, He can heal people and He can cast out demons and He can do wonders and His teaching is the likes of which no one has ever heard for its profundity, clarity, truthfulness.

I guess the concession would be that at least they didn't call Him satanic. Many people did. John 10:20 says, "Many people called Him demonic." Well they bought in to the lie of the Pharisees. There were some, like we saw back in the earlier chapters of Mark, that said they were glorifying God for what they saw because they thought it had to be the power of God. But there were many people who were buying the lie the Pharisees were sowing, according to verse 22 of Mark 3, they were going everywhere all the time, this is relentless, folks, they were just repeating this same mantra that Jesus was satanic. They came down from Jerusalem saying He's possessed by Beelzebul, He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons. This is where they landed.

So I guess we could say that at least the family hadn't gone that far. But that was not a reasonable explanation for Jesus. Lunatics don't talk and act and think and behave the way He did.

Now to complete the story about His family coming to seize Him, we have to go to the end of the chapter, verse 31. This is where they show up. In the meantime there's another story about the Pharisees, that is a very important story, folks, from verse 22 to verse 30. It's the text that talks about the unforgivable sin...the unforgivable sin and we're going to talk about that next Sunday. But we have to complete this story, so we go to verse 31, "Then His mother and His brothers arrived."

They came from Nazareth, no doubt, to Capernaum. They arrive. Standing outside, they sent word to Him and called Him. Matthew 12:47 says the same thing, the parallel passage, Matthew gives us the same account.

By the way, I need to say as a footnote. The section in between where the leaders call Him satanic, this text in Mark 3 is parallel to Matthew 12. But that happened on another occasion in Luke 11. Luke 11 has a record of almost an identical conversation but it's different. This all happened in Galilee. The one in Luke 11 happened in Judea. This one happened in response to the healing of a deaf and dumb and blind demon-possessed man. The one in Luke, the situation of the healing was

different. What that tells me is that this conversation happened at least twice and the facts are it may have happened a lot. And that lets us know that the Pharisees were doing everything they could everywhere they went to tell people He was satanic. That was their mantra. Well we'll get to that next time.

So His mother and His brothers arrived and stand outside. They sent word to Him and called Him. He's inside the house. He's surrounded by the crowd. Verse 32 says, "A crowd was sitting around Him and they said to Him, 'Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.'" This is Mary, certainly a believer...not to be included in the general unbelief of His half brothers and sisters who thought He was completely crazy. She wants to come and rescue Him for other reasons. She's..maybe she wants to protect Him, so she's there.

They want You...as if they had some right to Him. Do you remember when He was twelve-years old? Mary must have remembered this. And He went to Jerusalem with His family and they left and they're starting home in the caravan and they realize that He's not there and they go back and they find Him and He's in the temple and He's asking questions of the doctors. And they say, "What are You doing? Why have You done this to us?" And He says, "I must be about My Father's business. You're not in charge of Me anymore." He had just reached the age where He was the Son of the Law. "You're not in charge of Me. You're not the authority anymore in My life."

He went back home as a dutiful child but not of necessity, only in time in God's timing until the hour for Him to begin to do the will of His Father as it was expressed. So the mother and the brother still feel some familial responsibility for Him as if they had some authority over Him. And so they come to try to rescue Him. And in a most interesting reply, verse 33, He answers the crowd who are saying, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You," answering them He said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?"

Wow! He accepted the interruption. I don't know what He was saying at the time, we don't know. But He accepted the interruption. He could take any interruption and turn it into a critical lesson, couldn't He? He begins with a question, "Who are My mother and My brothers?"

Well, He's not saying, "I don't know My family." Of course He knows His family. He knows exactly from a human standpoint who His mother is and He knows exactly who His brothers and sisters are. Nor is He showing disdain toward them on a human level. It isn't that He is unloving toward Mary, after all, when He was hanging on the cross, according to John chapter 19, He saw Mary, you remember, when He was hanging on the cross. And He looked at John and He said, "Behold your mother," and He looked to Mary and said, "Behold your son." And He committed His mother in a loving act of care into the protective care of John. He loved her right down to the very moment of His own death when He was preoccupied with making sure she was cared for. That is not an issue.

Well maybe He didn't love His siblings? Oh, He loved them too. In fact He loved them right into His Kingdom because in Acts chapter 1 verse 14 when the believers were gathered in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost, it says, verse 14, "Mary was there with His brothers." We may even include His sisters. Did He love them? Sure, He loved them enough to save them. He loved them enough to draw them to Himself.

So here they think He's a lunatic. Some months later, however, they have confessed Him as Lord and they're gathered in the Upper Room. So this is not a statement that in any way diminishes His love for His family.

By the way, His family didn't resent Him, either. I think His family did just the opposite. Take two of His brothers, James and Jude, or Judas. If James is a familiar name, it should be, he wrote the epistle called James. He was also the head of the Jerusalem church. James certainly didn't have any axe to grind with Jesus because this is how James introduces his letter and himself. "James, a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ." How about that?

By the way, Jude, his other brother, introduces his epistle, "Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ." He loved them and they came to love Him and to submit to Him as slaves to their Lord.

So this is not about that. Jesus is saying something here that transcends that kind of consideration. What He is saying is, "Who really has a genuine relationship to Me? Who really has a genuine relationship to Me? Who has a lasting relationship to Me?" Verse 34, He answers His own question. "Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, 'Behold My mother and My brothers.'" All of you who believe in Me, for whoever does the will of God, he's My brother and My sister and mother.

The Catholic Church would like to have us single out Mary. Jesus didn't do it. Jesus didn't single out Mary...far from it. He said, in effect, "That relationship isn't important. That relationship doesn't matter. The relationship that matters is the relationship of obedience to the will of My Father."

Luke 11...in Luke 11 Jesus is speaking about issues regarding demons and following up that other conversation with the Pharisees about Him being Beelzebul, and in verse 27 while Jesus is talking about this, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed. Blessed is Your mother." That was a very kind gesture on her part, wasn't it? That was a Jewish way of giving honor to Him and to His uniquely privileged mother, kind of Jewish expression.

What's His response? Verse 28, "On the contrary...on the contrary, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it." The only relationship with Jesus that matters is the relationship of one who

obeys the Word of God...who obeys the will of God as expressed in the Word of God and therefore obeys the gospel of Christ. "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him. Believe in Him. Confess Him as Lord."

Well, back to verse 34, "Behold My mother and My brothers, and who are they? Whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother." The writer of Hebrews tells us that we are Christ's brothers and He's not ashamed to call us brothers. James doesn't introduce himself in his epistle as "James," and then raise the flag of "the half brother of Jesus." Jude doesn't introduce himself as "Jude, the half brother of Jesus." That relationship doesn't matter, that has no consequence spiritually, no consequence eternally. Both of them are happy to introduce themselves as slaves of Jesus Christ because a slave brings up one great concept...submission, obedience. The only relationship that matters is the relationship that you have with Jesus Christ as a believer in Him, that is manifest by obedience.

You know, this is the message of Jesus from the get-go. If you go back t o Matthew chapter 7, that great sermon, the first sermon in the New Testament as He brings it to its great climax in chapter 7 and verse 21, He says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' is going to enter the Kingdom of heaven." You want to enter heaven? Not everybody who says, "Lord, Lord," but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. And the will of My Father who is in heaven is that you believe in the Son and confess Him as Lord and obey Him and submit to Him and obey His Word.

He even tells the story at the end of the sermon about a man who hears the words of Mine and acts on them is like a wise man who builds his house on a rock. The rains fell, the floods came, the winds blew, slammed against the house, it didn't fall. It was founded on a rock. But on the other hand, everyone who hears these words of Mine does not obey them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew, slammed against the house and it fell in great was its fall.

Always in the New Testament, salvation is demonstrated by obedience. John 8:32, "You are My true disciple if you do whatever I tell you. If you continue in My Word." But Jesus said this again and again and again that obedience is the mark. You can look at it in John 12, John 14, John 15. "If you keep My commandments, you're Mine."

I think it lingered so much in the mind of John that long after he had written the gospel of John, when he wrote the epistle it was still in the forefront of his mind. In 1 John 2:4 he wrote, "The one who says I have come to know Him and doesn't keep His commandments, he's a liar." So if you say you know Him, but you don't keep His commandments, you don't know Him at all. Whoever keeps His Word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected, by this we know that we are in Him, by keeping His Word, obeying His Word. He recycles the same reality in chapter 3 verse 7, "Make sure no one deceives you. The one who practices righteousness is righteous. The one who practices sin is of the

devil. No one born of God practices sin, His seed abides in him, he can't sin, he's born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious. Anyone who doesn't practice righteousness is not of God.

It's that simple. If you obey the gospel and you obey the Word of God, subsequent to the gospel, you give evidence of a transformed life. First John 3:24, "The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him." He recycles it again in chapter 5, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and whoever loves the Father, loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and observe His commandments."

James, who knew this principle well, James 1:22 writes, "Don't be hearers of the Word only, but..what?...doers or you'll deceive your own selves."

Now in the sense it's a sad thing that His family had come to this conclusion but the good news is, they abandoned this ridiculous assumption that He was crazy and embraced the fact that He was Lord.

Now, go back to the story for a moment. The story within the story begins in verse 22. "When the scribes come down from Jerusalem, they say that He's possessed by Beelzebul." He's not just mentally deranged, that's not an explanation for Him. He is powered by hell. This is far more sinister. This is far more spiritually devastating. This can be terminal.

Drop down to verse 28, "I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever utters against the Holy Spirit a blasphemy, never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin." The eternal sin, what was it? The eternal sin was the conclusion after all the evidence was in that Jesus didn't possess the power of God but the power of Satan. You can't be saved from that final conclusion. And that's exactly where the leaders of Israel were.

We're going to talk about that. The implications of the unforgivable sin and to whom it applies, next time.

As we come to the end of the service, Lord, we do so with grateful hearts, we thank You for the power of the truth, we thank You for the way in which it carries its own weight. When we just open the Word and let it speak, its power is well nigh overwhelming. We feel like we've had a conversation with You and indeed we have. Now we understand we must come to Jesus and confess Him as Lord and abandon all the superficial niceties saying that He's a good teacher and we admire Him. We don't have that option. Can't be a lunatic, that's a lunatic assumption, nor can He be a liar from hell. We're left with the only possibility when all the evidence is in and that He is Lord of all. And so we as believers happily stand up by the power of the Holy Spirit and confess Jesus as Lord. That is our

great confession. May we demonstrate that confession in a life of obedience to His commands as willing slaves, giving Him all the glory we pray in His name. Amen.

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