

Sermon for June 6, 2021 - Second Sunday in Pentecost

Gospel: Mark 3:20-35

Then [Jesus] went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."

And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul" and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

"Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" — for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

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There is a LOT of interesting stuff going on in the Gospel lesson today...Let me sum it up.

His family said, "He is out of his mind."

The experts from the Big City said "He is possessed by Satan. And Satan is at work in him."

Jesus answered...

"A nation, divided against itself, cannot survive as a Nation." And "A family, divided against itself, cannot survive as a family."

Who are those belonging to the family of God? "Whoever does God's will belongs to the family and nation of God."

I guess I'm skipping the bit about attempting to rob the strong man, and the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. That's pretty important too. That's just the color; the outline in black and white is the point that Jesus is making both to his family and the teachers of the Law... That if they think they have a clue how the world works, how God is working IN the world, THEY have it ALL WRONG. And if they think that they are standing on SOLID GROUND? He's about to yank the rug out from under their feet.

The "color" in this picture is proof that they are DEAD wrong in their opinion of WHO HE IS.

What they say to him is their desperate attempt to control him, and make him conform to their idea of nation and family.

Jesus, as the strong man, will indeed hand himself over to them, so that they may plunder him...

And as Jesus says to his disciples in John 16:2 "They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will **think they are offering a service to God.**" That's how confused they are.

But it also applies to nations and families too. When divided against themselves, they cannot stand. They will fall.

Notice, they do it to themselves... they become SELF-DESTRUCTIVE.

We can see this in the character of Sampson, the heroic strong-man, Judge of Israel. He allows himself to be tied up not once, not twice, but three times... not just with ropes but by a life of luxury and decadence; the pursuit of idle pleasures lead ultimately to self-destruction. It's an old, old story... the most familiar tragedy.

Jesus corrects them by saying... "MY PEOPLE, FAMILY, NATION follow God's will."

It's been hard this month, already, because I feel very much the words of last week's Old Testament lesson at work.

ISAIAH 6:

"Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am dwelling among a people of unclean thoughts, ideas and agendas."

Here I am pointing fingers at all the signs of moral decay. But I must remember the entire verse includes me...

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD
of Hosts; all the earth is full of His glory."

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke.

Then I said: "Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I too, am a man of unclean lips dwelling among a people of unclean lips; and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts."

And here is our great good news...

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a glowing coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.

Wonderful!

Now where is the Gospel in the Gospel lesson for today? I suppose it is here.

Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said,

"Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

"Truly, Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; for they are guilty of an eternal sin."

All sin can be forgiven... All SINNERS too... except the unbeliever, those who deny the gift of the Holy Spirit are guilty of the one and ONLY unforgivable sin... For in order to be saved we must *believe*.

And this is why my pet sacrament is Baptism.

My joke is that all Lutheran pastors have a "pet" sacrament. It's the one they turn to in crisis. In my experience with Lutheran pastors, I would say that most of my brothers in the ministry hang their hats, so to speak, on the Lord's Supper. And why not? It feeds the family as well as the soul. But my anchor point is in my identity. Who am I? What am I doing here? And Baptism answers that question solidly.

“I have put my name on you. You are mine. I will never abandon you. I have already forgiven all your many sins, The only sin I have not taken away is the sin that lets you abandon me.”

That is both LAW and Gospel.

Whatever foolish thinking and behavior is going on in the world, trust the God who became one of us, in order that we might have HIS righteousness...And we don't need to plunder what has been freely given.

Amen