

Following God is Crazy!

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June 8-9, 2024

Year B: Pentecost 3: Mark 3: 20-35

²⁰and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” ²²And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.” ²³And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. ²⁷But 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; ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — ³⁰for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

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

Following God can appear crazy to those around us. Yet we can do amazing things for God. Jesus calls us to withhold judgment, so that our hearts remain soft.

“Why that's just crazy!”ⁱ

We've all said those words. We've said them to a good friend in teasing. We've said them about another person that we really dislike.

Two teenage boys Get a notion in their heads for a risky behavior. They get caught in the act. The angry parent says, “What were you thinking? That's just crazy!”

We listen to politicians debating their ideas should they get elected into office. For the politician that doesn't fit our own particular ilk, we mutter under our breath, "Why that's just stupid crazy."

Jesus was healing people. We're only three chapters into mark and he has done so many acts of good, that his reputation has spread far and wide. So much so, that he can hardly move about without the crowds following him. They see who he really is they understand that at some level, He is of God.

But Jesus' own family members and the scribes have decided that he is crazy, out of his mind. It's the only way that they can make sense of what is happening. They are not just muttering it under their breath. They are saying it publicly. It's a way of putting Jesus down. It is demeaning and disparaging. Condescending and patronizing.

When people talk like this it is typically because they don't feel safe. The angry parent talking to the teenage son, while perhaps impressed by his ingenuity, is actually horrified that the boy could really have gotten hurt. When we listen to the politician spout off an idea that we don't like, at some level we might be afraid that their policies could hurt us. So to see ourselves as above or better than the other, to make ourselves feel safer, we name them, 'stupid' or 'crazy'.

For Jesus' family, clearly he had given up his safety because he was going up against the powers that be. And it was obvious that he didn't care what anybody thought. To bring shame upon your own family was terrible. In this honor shame system, what other conclusion could they come to?

Have you ever done anything crazy for God? Have we ever done anything crazy for God?

In seminary, there were many students who had left successful, high paying careers because they had this internal sense of call. Previous work employers and colleagues thought that they were unwise to leave what was certain for a life of uncertainty.

You're at the bar with your friends on a Saturday night. "Hey, only one more and I need to go. Church is in the morning."

"Man, I don't get you. Nobody believes that stuff anymore. Why do you go, every single week?! You're nuts."

Have you ever done anything crazy for God? Have we ever done anything crazy for God?

Let's house homeless families in our church! Let's allow people living in their vehicles on our land. What will they do? What will they be like? Are they crazy people?

No. We are. Think about it. This crazy church King of Glory voted years ago to welcome all people regardless of status, skin color, marital status, or gender. Some of our dear friends, they and their households walked away.

Our larger national church goes into third world countries to teach people better farming practices, and give women micro loans to start their own businesses. Some would say that's absolute foolishness. "Just let those people live their own lives. Don't you know there will be another drought next season? They can pull themselves up by their own bootstraps."

"It's a waste of time to welcome the refugee and the orphans into our midst. I'm not related to them. They aren't my family. I don't care if they do go to church."

Well, how outlandish does this sound? "God forgives you all your sins! God loves everybody the same! God is a fanatical, resurrecting, powerful God beyond all world powers and you and me have access to that same power through the Lord Jesus Christ?" Sound a little outrageous? Foolish, silly? Absolutely! We will stake our lives on it. Period.

Jesus steals away his accuser's opportunity to judge Him. And He steals our opportunities to judge others. We can absolutely evaluate the fruits of others' lives...that's scriptural. Yet blanket judgements about one right way to follow God are not acceptable. We are called to keep our hearts soft...allowing God to judge other's journeys.

There are many ways to follow God. God encompasses numerous ways to worship and serve and shine God's light in the world. What might seem non-sensical to us, is actually serving God's purpose in a way we aren't supposed to understand. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For God's foolishness is wise than human wisdom and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. (1 Corin 1:25)

Jesus explained it this way to his accusers. "Look if I'm out of my mind, if I was Satan, as you are claiming I am...a fanatical evil force, then why would I fighting with my own demons? A house divided cannot stand. And by the way, you've

seen my works – which are good - and yet you cannot see where they come from, which is evil. Therefore, you are calling the Incarnate God, “Satan,” and that is an unforgiveable sin.”

A quick word about this challenging verse. The Jewish concept of Holy Spirit was a revealer of truth so that people could recognize truth when it was seen and heard. If Jesus’ challengers had repeatedly refused the nudging of the Spirit to recognize God in Jesus, then they couldn’t see the good and Holy in Him. Without identifying Jesus as God, there is no accepting of our sinful states. Without a sense of sin, there is no need for repentance, and with no repentance, there is no forgiveness.ⁱⁱ That’s why this particular sin is unforgiveable.

What we do here each week, is characterized by some as outlandish and foolish. So be it. Can we keep being crazy for Christ? Can we love without judgment? Can we open our hearts? Can we speak up for injustice? Can we advocate for those with no voice? Can we serve following our Lord’s example especially when the world might think us nuts?

Let’s do it, for Jesus is crazy in love with this very world and with us! Amen.

ⁱ Idea for this sermon from David Lose. <https://www.davidlose.net/2018/06/pentecost-3-b-crazy-love/>

ⁱⁱ Barclay, William. The Gospel of Mark. Westminster Press. Philadelphia, PA. 1954. Pg.76.