

The Unforgivable Sin Mark 3:28

Isaiah 5:20-25

1Cor 13

Psalm 111

Last week we looked at the account of the scribes claiming that Jesus must have a demon, and it is by the power of Satan that he is doing the miracles that he is doing. So this week I want to read starting in verse 23-35 as we continue this discourse between Jesus and the Scribes.

So we see here in our passage today, in verses 28-29 a topic that can be rather controversial. Jesus mentions The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, an unforgivable sin. I want to take a few moments this morning to spend a little time on this before we move on to the rest of the text.

I think one of the keys to understanding these 2 verses is actually bound up in verse 30, where Mark says that Jesus said this, “because the scribes said he has an unclean spirit.” So it is often wondered what this blasphemy against the spirit that Jesus mentions here is, and there are some who worry about committing this unforgivable sin. But I think to really understand this we need to look at the context of these verses and what is happening here. The definition of blaspheming is “to speak reproachfully, rail at, or revile. So this blaspheming against the Holy Spirit is to speak in such a way that brings reproach, or to rail against, or revile against the Holy Spirit. Is this not exactly what we see the scribes were doing here when they equate the Holy Spirit to being beelzebub? when they equate the power that they saw in Jesus as being from Satan, the Father of Demons instead of seeing it as being from God the Father who sent him.

By attributing Jesus power to cast out demons as to being granted to him by Satan, they spoke evil of the Holy Spirit committing this sin that Jesus mentions here. Basically they were calling the holy spirit a demon which has the effect of denying the evidences before them that Jesus was truly the Messiah, the Son of God sent from God the Father. Because they denied this evidence, and equated it to Satanic power they therefore denied themselves the ability or any hope to believe these evidences that were right before them, so by doing this, they have denied themselves all hope of forgiveness that comes only from Jesus Christ.

It seems to me in the context of this passage, and the conversation that is going on we can pretty easily determine that this blaspheming the Holy Spirit is believing that the holy spirit itself is not from God, but is in fact Satan. It is pretty easy to see how this would be an unforgivable sin. This denial of the holy Spirit, and of Jesus is a denial of the only person that can offer salvation, forgiveness, and reconciliation to God. From Jesus baptism when God said this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, all the way to this point in his ministry if a person who has witnessed these things has convinced themselves that Jesus is evil, and the works that he has committed, and the teachings he has taught are evil, that person is hopelessly lost. This is the person that Isaiah talked about in our reading this morning. This is those who call evil good, and good evil, who put darkness for light, and light for darkness. This sin, having such a deep rooted denial of Jesus and the holy spirit, is an eternal sin, an unforgivable sin.

In addressing this sin that the scribes were committing Jesus points out that there is a unique and significant pitfall that this sin poses for the religious person. The so called, sinners and tax collectors, the non religious, are less likely to commit this type of sin than those who are educated, religious, and moral, those who think themselves holy or righteous. This stands to show that sins such as immoral wickedness actually poses a lesser problem than pride and self-righteousness.

This warning to the scribes points to who exactly should be heeding this warning. It is the church leaders, and theological teachers. The People who are in authority, just like the scribes of Jesus day, it is a warning to those who have authority, to those whose teaching influences others. Elsewhere in the new testament we see this type of warning given to the new testament churches as well. As some thoughts I read about this studying this week it was suggested that this unforgivable sin was unique to the scribes and to this exact time, yet we see other examples mentioned in scripture of such types of sins, so I do not think that this was unique to just this situation with these scribes.

Hebrews 6:4-6 sets forth a warning saying, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put him to an open shame. And in Hebrews 10:19 “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way which he consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, his flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain and fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses, of how much worse punishment do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the spirit of grace? “

One pastor I was reading on this section about the unforgivable sin said that it is unlikely, if not impossible for us to commit such a sin today because we do not have such a circumstance before us. Jesus is not here, casting out demons, we do not have the opportunity to attribute his power to Satan as the scribes did. But what we do see here in these verses is a warning for the church to be wary of such things. It is easy to look at this and point our fingers to the Jews and their denial of Christ, but this is not distinctly a Jewish problem, I think this actually is a human problem.

I think what it mainly boils down to is a denial of Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, the one on whom rests our salvation is a sin that is unforgivable. You can not deny the only one who can deliver you from death, and expect to be delivered from death. You have burned all your bridges in a manner of speaking. This reminds me of the example of the Man who in the midst of a flood stood on the roof of his house praying that God would save him. First a canoe came by offering to rescue him, to which he replied, God will save me. Later, a 2nd boat came by offering to save him to which he replied the same, God will save me, then lastly a helicopter came, lowered a rope and told him to grab on, but he replied, no, God will save me. Eventually his house broke up and the flood waters carried him away and he died. When standing before God he asked, God why did you not save me? I prayed, I had faith, I cried out to you but you did not save me. To which God responded, I sent to you 2 boats and a helicopter to which you denied.

Christ is the only way to be reconciled to God, he is the only way, it is only by him, and through him that we have hope, that we can have forgiveness of sin and to be able to stand before God, not on our merit, but only on the blood of Jesus Christ. You can not continue to deny him all the way to your grace, and then expect that he will ultimately end up excepting you. And while this may seem bleak, and hopeless, verse 28 stands here to give hope. "Assuredly I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter." Anyone who is worried about committing this unforgivable sin, probably has not yet committed it for if you are worried about it shows that your heart is not hardened and that there is evidence for potential repentance. Remember, there is no record in all scripture of anyone coming to God asking for forgiveness and being denied.

continuing on here, verse 31. "Then his brothers and his mother came, and standing outside they sent to him, calling him. And a multitude was sitting around him, and they said to him, look your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you. But Jesus answered them saying Who is my mother, or my brothers? And he looked around in a circle at those who sat about him and said, here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God is my brother, my sister, and mother." So last week we said that in verse 21 where it says that some of his own people heard about the turmoil he was causing with his miracles, and teachings went out to lay hold of him for they said he is out of his mind." These followers were trying to negate these claims of the scribes and pharisees, trying to appease the religious authorities in an attempt to try to get Jesus out of some trouble.

And here we see that his mother, and brothers were outside the house that was crammed full of people, so much so that they could not even eat bread according to Mark in verse 20. It is interesting to take note of the irony here, usually it is the family who is on the inside, who is close, who would be in the house, but here we see it reversed, the multitudes are inside, and the family is outside. And we see here that the family is outside, calling to him. Just like we saw with his followers in verse 21, now his family is trying to assert their claim on him. Jesus' response to their summons I am sure got an interesting response from those who heard it. I don't think that he was necessarily being rude to his mother and brothers, but was making a clear statement that when it comes to his ministry, when it comes to his followers the bond that he has with each of his spiritual brothers and sisters is stronger than the blood bond he has with his physical mother and brothers.

This statement ends up being an interesting one, for it would seem that what he has done has made a claim that those who assume that they are close to Jesus may want to think again, and those who are afar have hope. In making this statement Jesus has redefined what it means to be in the family of God. The Israelite were God's chosen people, those who were the children of Abraham, they counted themselves as the children of God. And in a sense they were, we can see in the old testament God's care for them, including his chastisement when they strayed just like any good father should do to their children. But, just as we see here in his account with Jesus' mother and siblings, there is more to the story. Look where the Israelite are now, they are the scribes and pharisees that are plotting against Jesus. The ones who assumed to be close to God, the ones who believed themselves to be children of God, are here seen as the ones outside, and those who believe and have faith in Jesus are seen as the family of God.

This statement by Jesus shows us today that having any lineage, or bloodline, or physical tie to Jesus accounts for nothing. Mary being Jesus mother did not account for her being righteous, it was only by faith, just as it was in the beginning, just as it was during this messianic age, it is the same today, by faith alone, in Christ alone.

There have always only been 2 peoples, those who are disciples and followers of Christ, and those who are not. No lineage, bloodline, race, nationality, or creed matters when it comes to having a right standing before God, only the blood of his son accounted toward us through faith has any merit.

At the time of Mark's writing this gospel it would have been around 40 years after the death of Jesus. At this point, James the brother and Jesus was the leader of the church in Jerusalem, and Mary was held in a place of honor within the churches, but that does not stop mark from making a point that it is only fellowship and by faith in Christ that one is counted as being a part of his family. If mark puts those around Jesus, even his own mother and brothers under question, then think where that leaves those who are relying on traditions, or baptism, or being born into a Christian home, or church attendance.

If being a Jew to whom God made promises to did not guarantee salvation, and if being the mother and brother of Christ did not guarantee salvation, your traditions, church attendance, baptism, or Christian family does not guarantee your salvation either. Just look at this account this morning, the scribes, the religious leaders, the ones who were physical descendants of Abraham, Christ warns them about blaspheming the Holy Spirit. This is a sobering thought, we must not assume that we are necessarily in with Jesus, lest we be like the scribes and Pharisees. There are so many people today who make this assumption, they equate their own perceived level of goodness as merit before God. They claim to be baptized by the Holy Spirit and do miracles and signs in the name of God, they claim to be a member of the Holy Roman Church and find their sanctification through traditions and rituals.

Just as we read this morning in 1 Corinthians, all of these things are like sounding brass and clanging symbols. It amounts to absolutely nothing as far as salvation is concerned. No matter your claims, no matter your creed, true discipleship is those who are sitting at the feet of Jesus and doing the will of God. So in conclusion, I guess the biggest implications of this discourse here the distinction of those who are inside and those who are outside, just like it was when we talked about those who were disciples and followers and Christ, and those who were a part of the nameless multitudes. We see here examples of various degrees, the scribes, the religious leaders, the teachers, the authorities making wild accusations and in the process blinded by their hatred of Jesus and being unable to see and interpret the signs as being from God and instead equate it to Satan have solidified their position of being outside the family of God.

Then we see Christ's mother, and brothers. And we see how even when it comes to the qualifications to be considered a part of Christ's family has nothing to do with ethnic, or physical ties, but rather true discipleship and the qualification to be a part of Christ's family is spiritual in nature through faith and obedience. I think the big lesson that we can take away from this is to be wary of assumptions. Do not assume that because your parents are Christians, that you therefore must be as well. And the same goes for Parents who raise their children up in a Christian home should likewise not assume that their children are therefore Christians either. This faith is individual, it is personal, and it hinges all on Christ and our personal relationship with him. Your church association can not bring you salvation, the priest can not absolve you of your sins, your pastor can not convince or reassure you of your salvation, it is only by sitting at the feet of Christ, being in his word, listening to his instruction, and taking up your cross and following him personally that one can be a true disciple, a true believer.