

Mark 3:20-35

St. Marks's - June 9, 2024

Third Sunday after Pentecost

Michelle Cox

The Holy Spirit

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The crowd came together again, so that Jesus and his disciples could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." And he called them to him, and spoke 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 his end has come. But 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.

"Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

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

The Holy Spirit

These might be the scariest words Jesus ever spoke:

“...whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”

To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is the only sin I know of that cannot be forgiven.

When we “blaspheme” we show disrespect and contempt in a most insulting way. That is what “blaspheme” means, to show disrespect and contempt in the most insulting way.

One of the joys of this reading is in these words,

“Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Jesus speaks of both the glorious and the frightening in this reading.

Today’s story of Jesus takes place in the early days of his ministry. He has just chosen the 12 disciples who will be closest to him and he has started healing countless people and cleansing several of unclean spirits. The Jewish authorities have taken notice.

Last week’s reading flows into our reading today and ends by saying, “The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.” Pharisees and Herodians were not typically allies. Pharisees were opposed to Herod and the Romans and Herodians were favorable to both. It seems that, ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend’ in this reading.

Jesus not only has the attention of the scribes and Pharisees, he has already challenged their authority. Their authority that some of them will treasure above all else.

Today we read that his family has come to take him away from the crowds the crowds that have begun to follow him. His family may have come to save him from those Pharisees, Herodians, and others who wish him harm. But Jesus’ resolve, commitment, and his love for all of us is already established deep within him. He knows who he is and he knows why he has come.

Some were saying that Jesus had lost his mind. Scribes came from Jerusalem to take advantage of this accusation, possibly in hopes of ending his ministry before it could grow. These scribes confronted Jesus in Capernaum, about 85 miles from Jerusalem where they started. They came telling the crowd that he was possessed by Beelzebul (just one of names for Satan). Beelzebul translates as “Lord of Filth”; a disrespectful and insulting accusation.

Jesus responds powerfully and asks the rhetorical question, “How can Satan cast out Satan?” Closing with, “a house divided against itself cannot stand”.

Jesus shows himself to be of God. Jesus shows himself to fight Satan at every turn. Jesus shows himself to defeat Satan as he leads his followers, all of us, to eternal life with him in Heaven.

The Holy Spirit is in all of this. The Holy Spirit today is in all of the followers of Jesus. When we show disrespect or disdain for a sister or brother in Christ we are blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus names this as an unforgivable sin to the scribes who were accusing him he is talking to a group that fully intends to keep up the blasphemy. A group that shows no remorse. A group that refuses to repent of this most grievous sin.

Those scary words that Jesus utters to the scribes, telling them that their sin will not be forgiven, were in response to the scribes’ insulting disrespect when they referred to The Holy Spirit as being unclean.

The Holy Spirit was in Jesus, just as Jesus was in the Father. This was true “in the beginning”, as it was at the time of this confrontation, as it is today, as it always will be.

In the past, The Holy Spirit ministered to and taught people during the days recorded in our Old Testament, but on the day of Pentecost, after Jesus finally ascended into Heaven, things changed.

On that day and on every day since The Holy Spirit changes disciple of Jesus (by that I mean every believer and follower of Christ Jesus). The Holy Spirit brings all of us into the body of Christ and The Holy Spirit dwells in us.

When we blaspheme The Holy Spirit, we blaspheme ourselves and as Jesus said,
“a house divided against itself cannot stand”

If we were to show disrespect and contempt in a most insulting way to The Holy Spirit, we would be doing the very same thing to ourselves because we are filled with The Holy Spirit.

When we sin we are most definitely showing disrespect and contempt for The Holy Spirit. When we sin we are not following the teaching of Jesus and the will of The Father.

When we sin we are called to recognize our failing, correct our thoughts and actions, repent, and ask for God's forgiveness and our loving Father in Heaven will welcome us back as the prodigal son that we all are.

It seems that the sin of blaspheming The Holy Spirit is an eternal sin by definition, when we leave the sin as it is.

Condemnation comes when we do not recognize our sins and repent of them. This is a sobering message. Worthy of prayer and contemplation.

Beyond that specific contemplation there is a nugget of wonder and awesome joy that's somewhat over-shadowed in this message. It's the part about The Holy Spirit being in each one of we followers of Jesus.

On that day of Pentecost and at our own baptism we were invited to share in The Trinity in a most intimate way. The Spirit dwells in us. The Spirit dwells in me and in you and because of that, we enter into The Trinity.

We sometimes lose sight of that. We sometimes hide the Spirit under sinful ways. Ways in which we choose to live. Sinful ways that we choose to accept instead of asking God for the strength we need to repent.

When we feed the Spirit within we change. We live in the kingdom of God more fully than the kingdom of the world. When we feed the Spirit that dwells in us we claim our identity in Christ. We glorify The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I pray that we will choose to do the will of God in all things. That we will belong to that Holy family established by Jesus. I pray that Jesus will welcome us as his brother and sister and mother. Just as he did those who were following him in our reading this morning. May God the Holy Spirit give us strength to do His will in all that we undertake.