

March 17, 2019

Mark 3:23-35

Undivided House (Mark 3:23-30). The text for this week's lesson begins in the middle of a scene that is unfolding in the life of Jesus. In the verses preceding our passage, Jesus has just called twelve men to be His disciples (Mark 3:14). Mark explained that Jesus called them "to be with him, to send them out to preach" (Mark 3:14). Next, Jesus goes to a house that quickly fills up when news spreads that He is there (Mark 3:20). In the crowd are two notable groups: some of Jesus' family members and some scribes. Both groups have interesting reactions to what is taking place. For example, the family of Jesus attempted to hold Him back because they thought "He's out of his mind" (Mark 3:21). The scribes, on the other hand, made two disparaging statements as they watched Jesus. First, they claimed, "He is possessed by Beelzebul;" and, second, they stated, "He drives out demons by the ruler of the demons" (Mark 3:22). It is at this point that our lesson picks up the narrative.

Having heard what the scribes said, Jesus responded by telling a parable. Jesus used parables regularly in His ministry to teach spiritual truth to His followers. This parable begins with a question: "How can Satan drive out Satan?" (Mark 3:23). Following the claim made by scribes that Jesus "drives out demons by the ruler of the demons" (Mark 3:22), it certainly is an appropriate question. As the parable continues, Jesus shows the fallacy in that line of thinking. In other words, why would Satan oppose himself? Moreover, Jesus asserts, "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25). One commentator explained that the point of the parable was to show that Satan could not be working in the exorcisms that Jesus was performing. Even more than that, the fact that Jesus performed exorcisms and cast out demons demonstrated that He was more powerful than Satan (Mark 3:27).

Misunderstood by Family (Mark 3:31-32). As was mentioned earlier, Jesus' family sought "to restrain him, because they said, 'He's out of his mind'" (Mark 3:21). Now, as the situation with the scribes intensified, they are described as trying to get him out of the house (Mark 3:31). What family members appeared? Mark stated that Mary and Jesus' brothers came (Mark 3:31). Mark is not specific at this point. In his Gospel, however, Matthew mentioned four specific brothers that Jesus had, as well as sisters (Matt. 13:55). Mark also does not specify why Jesus' family is asking for him. Considering the context, though, it would appear that they are trying to keep this situation from becoming worse.

United by Purpose (Mark 3:33-35). As was his nature, Jesus turned this moment into a teaching opportunity. When Jesus hears that his mother, brothers, and sisters are asking for him, this leads him to ask a question of the crowd. Jesus asked, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" (Mark 3:33). Then, referring to those seated around him, Jesus explained that "whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35). What a statement! Now that Jesus has come, a key feature of the kingdom is the focus on a relationship, not rules. Part of how that relationship is demonstrated is through our walk with the Lord.