**Sermon Pentecost 2B – Mark 3:20-35 – 6/6/21**

**Sermon Video Link -** [**https://youtu.be/AC15W1cy0aE**](https://youtu.be/AC15W1cy0aE)

I wouldn’t listen to them, they are crazy! Have you ever said that or thought it? Maybe you have said it about someone who has said something that you don’t agree with. Sometimes it is easier to dismiss what someone says by giving them a label. Maybe they are uneducated and uninformed, or over-educated and elitist, or too young and inexperienced, or too old and out of touch. Maybe they belong to a particular political persuasion, social class, race, ethnic or religious group. It is much easier to dismiss the views and actions of people if you use particular labels for them.

By calling them crazy or some other label we can destroy their credibility and their influence. The best thing is that we can ignore them, not listen to their views and not bother to take whatever they say into consideration.

It was no different for Jesus. Some people including his own family thought that he was crazy or had gone out of his mind. His family wanted to perform an intervention. The Greek word used here is the same one used when Jesus was arrested. His family wanted to physically restrain Jesus and most likely drag him back home to Nazareth to stop him from preaching, teaching, healing and doing other crazy things.

Understandably, Jesus’ family were concerned for him. Everywhere Jesus went people crowded around him. There were so many people following him around that he and his disciples couldn’t catch a break. They couldn’t even find time and space to eat. Meanwhile, he was upsetting the religious establishment and putting his own life in real danger. Most likely his family was concerned for his welfare and safety and that is why they wanted to intervene.

At the same time can you imagine how difficult it must have been for Jesus. He knew his family was concerned but he also knew that his own family did not believe him. We know this because in the gospel according to John we are told his brothers did not believe him, John 7:5.

The religious leaders had other motivations. The scribes came all the way from Jerusalem to check Jesus out. When they saw what he was doing they were upset. They could see he had genuine power. He was able to heal people and even exorcise demons. He taught with authority and yet he came from Galilee and the most unlikely town of Nazareth. The Messiah was expected to come from Jerusalem. Jesus broke the rules and healed on the Sabbath, and he forgave sins, something only God could do. He didn’t fit their expectations of the promised Messiah.

Instead of spending time listening to Jesus and getting to know him, the scribes publicly accused Jesus of being possessed by the devil and that he was casting out demons by the power of the ruler of the demons. By labelling Jesus in this way the scribes were attempting to discredit Jesus and stop the people from listening to them. They were also able to justify their refusal to listen to him and even consider the possibility that he could be from God. Instead of labelling him as a demon-possessed blasphemer, they were able to justify to themselves at least, their plans to get rid of him. Unfortunately, it stopped them from seeing the truth about Jesus, the truth that could save them eternally.

Two thousand years later people are still trying to discredit Jesus and those who follow him. Some people say we are deluded, or even crazy because we believe in the existence of God, let alone a God who became a human being and lived among us. They suggest that it is unreasonable to believe that Christ died and was raised from the dead and that we too will be raised to life. Often, people, today will dismiss Christians and their faith, and justify their refusal to listen to people of faith by labelling them as unreasonable, deluded and crazy. In the process, they are in danger of missing out on the full and eternal life Jesus has come to offer to them and all people.

Jesus was not possessed by Satan, he was filled with the Spirit of the living God. On Good Friday we remember the way Jesus stayed silent in the face of his accusers, but Jesus was not always silent. When the scribes accused him of being possessed by Satan Jesus carefully pointed out why he could not be possessed by saying, “How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand” Mark 3:24, NRSV.

Jesus was not under the control of Satan, but exactly the opposite. Jesus had come to bind up Satan and defeat him. Not only to defeat Satan but also to defeat sin and death.

Since Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, those who claimed he was possessed by Satan were blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. They were rejecting both Jesus and the Holy Spirit. If they continued to reject Jesus, they would be in danger of also rejecting the forgiveness Jesus offered and be guilty of an eternal sin.

On the other hand, those people who believe Jesus, trust that he is filled with the Holy Spirit and listen to his teaching will also be labelled. They will be labelled by Jesus. The labels he will give them are life-giving. Words that describe a relationship with the living Son of God. Jesus will call them brother and sister and mother.

People may try to use all sorts of labels to dismiss us, to make us feel worthless, stupid or crazy. Yet when we trust in Jesus all these names mean nothing, because we are part of God’s family. Above every other name that people may choose to call us, we are brothers and sisters of the Son of God and royal children of the living God.

Knowing our true and enduring identity is that we are children of God, we can live in confidence, knowing that no matter what others may call us, we are brothers and sisters of the Son of God. We are followers of the way and the truth and the life and heirs of eternal life with Jesus.

As Jesus spoke with confidence about himself, we also can speak in confidence about our brother and Lord. At the same being children of God, we can treat others the way Jesus treats all people. Filled with the love of Christ we can treat others with love, respect and compassion, refusing to put labels on them and dismissing them. Instead of listening to others, even when they disagree with us, seeking common ground and building relationships where we can speak truthfully to each other. Relationships where we have the opportunity, with gentleness and wisdom, to tell others the reason for our hope in Jesus our Lord and Saviour

Amen.

Pastor Rolf Lungwitz