

June 6th, 2021
Year B; 2nd Pentecost
2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1
Mark 3: 20-35

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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."

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

We have turned a page today in our lectionary readings. All through Easter, readings from the Gospel of John dominated our lessons. John is the last gospel to be written; scholars think it was written around 90ce, about 60 years past the events of Jesus's life. In John's Gospel we see the godly Jesus, calm, assured, able to see the long view, unafraid.

Today as we enter fully into the long ordinary season of Pentecost, the green on the altar and no major church holidays again until late fall, we return to gospel lessons from Mark.

Mark could not be more different than John; it was the earliest gospel written around 60ce. And the contrast to John might give us whiplash this morning! Mark shows the very human Jesus, wrestling with his ministry, feeling the pressure as the crowds grow, and the pressure of so many in need, in need of him, in need of healing.

This morning's reading finds Jesus trying to get a bite to eat! He has just chosen and gathered his 12 disciples, after a whirl of healings and preaching occasions. So, Jesus brings his friends home to Nazareth, to find a quiet spot at his family home to eat, and the crowd follows, so numerous they can't even grab a quick lunch. And with the large crowd comes those already feeling threatened by Jesus, scribes in

town from Jerusalem, calling him out.

And his family, Mary his mother, and his brothers, arrive home and try to calm things down by getting a handle on Jesus.

A frenzied and tense scene we have wandered into on this lazy summer morning!

Frame the scene in your mind, seeing those folks inside the house, and those outside the house. And remember, don't picture a brick rancher for the house!

Simple structure, perhaps 2 rooms, and one can easily hear what is being said inside and outside.

Inside is Jesus and his newly called disciples, a motley crew of fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot (a bit too ready for a fight, and all will fail him and desert Jesus soon enough) and along with these new "leaders" are some of the crowd who have pushed into the house, thus ending the hoped for meal. The crowd made up of those in need....hoping for healing in body or mind, those who are outcast and friendless....sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes, the unclean.

Outside are those who should be inside! First, the respectable....the leaders from Jerusalem, not filthy and unclean, but decent, well dressed, absolutely not in need! Self sufficient, never had to ask for help, no sir! And outside too are the family of Jesus, alarmed by Jesus's fast growing fame, scared for him with the scribes from Jerusalem showing up....and they want to "restrain him", to protect him, to talk to him about keeping this whole preaching and healing thing at a lower level, help others sure, but set some limits.

Inside and outside the house, insiders and outsiders, those folks close to Jesus and those he challenges.

Throughout human history society has taught, and still in 2021 our own country and culture teaches us, to respect and value family and to respect and value those who lead, our leaders whether in government, in houses of worship, in the military, or in the police. Family and leadership...

Inside and outside the house, insiders and outsiders, those folks close to Jesus and those he challenges.

Jesus, yet again, turns our worlds upside down, as family and leadership are on the outside, not in the position of honor we give them, but outside the house, trying unsuccessfully, to get Jesus to behave right.

First the Temple leaders, the scribes, compare Jesus to Satan....making the unsustainable argument that when he is healing folks and casting out demons, he is doing that as Satan. To which Jesus asks the obvious, duh question: "How can Satan cast out Satan?"

Or as The Message interpretation offers a vivid picture of Jesus stamping out this ludicrous argument from the leadership:

"Does it make sense to send a devil to catch a devil, to use Satan to get rid of Satan? A

constantly squabbling family disintegrates. If Satan were fighting Satan, there soon wouldn't be any Satan left."

Again, Jesus leaves the leaders outside, and keeps those who had been possessed by demons, those in need of healing, those struggling to get through the day.....they remain seated with him, eating with him.

Then the family of Jesus arrives at the house, Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. They are worried about him, the trouble he is stirring up, the attention he is receiving, and the text tells us they want to "restrain" Jesus. Pull him back, limit what he is getting into.

This reading always seems to come up in the lectionary right between our national observances of Mother's Day and Father's Day!

Awkward!

As his family calls to Jesus, from yes, outside the house, and folks say to him:

Hey! Your Mom is here! Your brothers!

Jesus replies:

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."

Hard to put that into a Hallmark card!!

Now it is one thing to reject leadership...in one's government, one's house of worship, among the military or the police....but your momma???

Inside and outside the house, insiders and outsiders, those folks close to Jesus and those he challenges.....

And we are reminded again that no one gets a pass from Jesus, he does not know us by our titles, like parent, police officer, Jesus knows us by our actions, our willingness to follow him, or as The Message helps us hear again:

"Obedience is thicker than blood. The person who obeys God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

This passage is not telling you to reject your momma, or your government leaders, or your priest! But Jesus is saying, put them all on the same level ground, no one gets elevated, no one gets a pass because of their status, their title, or their blood.

Everyone, everyone, the king and the beggar, all of us, are known by our actions, our willingness to follow Jesus, to feed the hungry, care for the sick, visit the imprisoned, clothe the shivering, welcome the stranger.....We need to allow our hearts to be broken by the suffering of this world.

Then then we will sit in the house, at the chaotic, busy, love-filled table of our Lord.

Amen.