

Lake Cities Community Church
January 25, 2009
On Your Mark
Pastor Craig Schill

“Family Feud”
Mark 3:20-35

The young man rang the bell in the town square and shouted, “Run for your lives – Everyone run for cover! May Day! May Day! Code Red! You are all in danger! Emergency! Emergency! Run!” The town mobilized in an instant. Mothers scooped up their babies. The parks emptied. Business people dove under their desks. The fire department came screaming out into the streets. Everything became chaos as the town prepared for the worst. ...A firefighter shouted to the boy, “What is it? What is going on?”

And Chicken Little said, “The sky is falling! The Sky is falling.” The people stopped their scuttling, and responded, “The Sky is falling – *are you crazy?*” “It is true, said the young chicken. Come with me – I’ll show you.” Chicken little’s father said, “No – son...” Chicken Little led them to an Oak Tree where they found, not a piece of the sky, but an acorn. “It must here somewhere...” Chicken Little began to look, but the father seized the moment - turned to the crowd with embarrassment and said: “Its OK everyone, there has been a little misunderstanding. It was just an acorn.” “No Dad it was a piece of the sky!” “Quiet son, this is embarrassing enough already.”

Have you ever, as a Christian, felt like Chicken Little? You have information that is true and important but sounds – let’s be honest - a little bit crazy. There is this God you believe is real – who happens to be invisible. He speaks to you – but you can’t hear him with your ears. He created everything --- from nothing. And there was a big flood, and a big

boat, and a big whale who ate a little guy named Jonah, and a big city that was destroyed by a marching band. And then there was this guy named Jesus, the Son of God, who did miracles – healing the blind and raising people from the dead. He was killed, somehow for you, and He rose from the dead. And God is going to judge the world with fire and there is a place called heaven and a place called hell. So believe in Jesus Christ before it is too late for your soul – We ring the bell – Ding! Ding! The Kingdom of God has arrived. Believe on the name of the Lord.

And then just like in Disney’s Chicken Little movie, your Dad, or maybe friend, or colleague interrupts and says, “Just a little misunderstanding here, people – it is just religion – not need to get crazy.” And you object – it is not just religion – it is true, it’s real... “Quiet! Isn’t this embarrassing enough already!?”

The question comes to us this morning: “How do we, as Christians, deal with the times when our faith is rejected?” It is time to admit that what you and I believe is considered crazy and is embarrassingly out-of-step with our post-Christian culture. What do you do where your family rejects you and your faith? How do you respond when your faith comes into uncomfortable ethical opposition at work? On one hand you try to “live in peace with all men” and on the other you come to understand Jesus’ statement, “I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” We are looking today at leprous twin concepts of rejection and misunderstanding. Turn with me to Mark chapter 3, verses 20-35.

At you turn there, let me remind us of the main question being asked in this book: Who is Jesus? That is the question we have seen over and over again and it is central in today’s passage. Jesus’ family – after observing him is now ready to answer that question;

and the Pharisees, based on their interaction with Christ have their answer ready as well.

Who is Jesus? Look with me – starting in verse 20.

Exposition – Jesus’ Family Part I - 3:20-35

Mark 3:20 And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. Jesus returns to Capernaum to probably Peter and Andrew’s home – back to headquarters; home base. The crowd, again, is described – as we talked about last week – with negative tones. They prevent Jesus and his disciples from the simple task of preparing a meal. Things are out of hand, and word of the situation comes to the family.

Mark 3:21 When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, “He has lost His senses.” Question: “**Who is Jesus?**” The family has concluded – Jesus is crazy! The Greek verb for “lost His senses” means, “the inability to reason normally, to lose one’s mind, to be out of one’s senses (BDAG, 350). If rationality and normality is here – Jesus is over there; he has “stepped out” of his sense. And so the family intervenes. Like Chicken Little’s father – they react out of concern for their son’s well-being, and to halt the embarrassment and shame this is bringing to the family name. In the Ancient Near East family honor meant everything, so they come to “take custody of him” – to seize him and silence Him.

Jesus is here facing opposition not by the Pharisees, or Herodians and Scribes, but by his own family! James Edwards comments, “Those closest to Jesus come to retrieve him, perhaps even to ‘deprogram’ him. The disconcerting reference that Jesus is ‘out of his mind’ reminds Mark’s readers that the religious authorities are not alone in their mistaken

apprehensions of Jesus. Their opposition is more explainable, for as outsiders they may be victims of ignorance, false reports, jealousy, or misguided zeal. The opposition of insiders is more troubling, for Jesus' associates ought to be advocates and not adversaries" (Edwards, 119).

Some of you know how painful it can be to have your faith rejected or misunderstood by those closest to you. From church history, we have recorded for us the conversion of a woman, Saint Perpetua in the Roman province of Carthage, Africa in the year 203 A.D. It was a time of great persecution for Christians in the Roman Empire. To become a Christian was to face certain death. And so her father pleaded with her to recant her new faith – "Daughter have pity on my gray head – have pity on me your father, if I deserve to be called your father, if I have favored you above all your brothers, if I have raised you to reach this prime of your life. Do not abandon me to the reproach of men, think of your brothers, think of your mother and your aunt, think of your child who will not be able to live while you are gone. Give up your pride! You will destroy all of us!" Perpetua did not give up her faith and she was put into jail. It is said that her father came to her in the dungeon in one final attempt to convince her to give up Christianity - and he brought to her tiny nursing baby and said, "Recant your faith for the sake of your nursing child." She refused, and she was killed with her maid Felicity – torn apart by wild beasts.

Most of us, Lord willing, will never face such a radical choice. Many of you children have the blessing of being raised with godly parents. But all of us, at some point have to decide – do I really believe this gospel? And if it comes to it – am I willing to pay the price? Is your faith strong enough to turn your back on your nursing child? Is your allegiance to Christ and love for Christ the strongest force in your life?

Scribes Story, 22-26

Well, with that, we set the family feud aside, because Mark turns our attention now to the Scribes – it is a literary technique Mark likes to use, we call sandwiching, where he starts a story, interrupts it, and then return to it at the end. The point by intertwining two stories is to link them together in order to make one powerful point. The Scribes are now ready to answer, “Who is Jesus”, verse 22:

Mark 3:22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”

Question: **Who is Jesus? Jesus is possessed by Satan.** What a radical charge. Jesus responds in parables: Mark 3:23 And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? Mark 3:24 “And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. Mark 3:25 “And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. Mark 3:26 “And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! Jesus is providing a logic lesson to the Scribes. Unless Satan has a death wish – which he does not – he would not work against himself. We had phrase – “Don’t shoot yourself in the foot.” Don’t do damage to your own cause. Satan has no intention of doing that.

Before we go on, just consider where we are at. In a perfect world the religious authorities and Jesus’ family would be Jesus’ biggest fans and strongest advocates yet they have just concluded that Jesus is either a madman, or possessed by the devil. Jesus is misunderstood and rejected. For many years, in America, the belief in Jesus Christ and the Bible was largely accepted in this country. It is no longer. America remains a religious

nation, but the specific teaching of Christianity... it is more and more difficult to ring the bell of the gospel and not come under criticism.

On June 20, 2005 Joel Osteen was on with Larry King on CNN. And this is a transcript from the CNN website: "KING: Because we've had ministers on who said, your record don't count. You either believe in Christ or you don't. If you believe in Christ, you are, you are going to heaven. And if you don't no matter what you've done in your life, you ain't.

OSTEEN: Yeah, I don't know. There's probably a balance between. I believe you have to know Christ. But I think that if you know Christ, if you're a believer in God, you're going to have some good works. I think it's a cop-out to say I'm a Christian but I don't ever do anything ... KING: What if you're Jewish or Muslim, you don't accept Christ at all? OSTEEN:

You know, I'm very careful about saying who would and wouldn't go to heaven. I don't know ... KING: If you believe you have to believe in Christ? They're wrong, aren't they?

OSTEEN: Well, I don't know if I believe they're wrong. I believe here's what the Bible teaches and from the Christian faith this is what I believe. But I just think that only God will judge a person's heart. I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don't know all about their religion. But I know they love God. And I don't know. I've seen their sincerity. So I don't know. I know for me, and what the Bible teaches, I want to have a relationship with Jesus."

My purpose is not to bash Joel Osteen or his ministry – I am sure he does much good for people. But for whatever reason, whether ignorance or bending to public pressure, he – as a leading Christian leader in our country - was not willing to ring the bell; he could not make himself say to a national audience that historic Christianity has always taught there is a heaven and there is a hell, and eternal life comes through one person – Jesus Christ the

Son of God. The very reason Jesus is in the position he is in, is because he has told the Pharisees – “You are wrong.” Repent and believe in me.

In verse 27, Jesus reveals His identity to them: [Mark 3:27](#) “But no one can enter the strong man’s house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house. Jesus, like an Old West Sherriff, discovers the rogue’s hideout, ties him up, rescues the kidnapped victim and returns him to his family. Now Jesus has hard words for the Pharisees – [Mark 3:28](#) “Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; , [Mark 3:29](#) but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — [Mark 3:30](#) because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.” I know a Christian rapper named Little Chris who wrote a song called “It Ain’t No Game.” These are words that Jesus could have said to the Pharisees: You think you need sin man * It’s up to your neck * Time out boy - Sit back and reflect * Understand why your life is a wreck * , Realize you need the Messiah * Its time to accept... * The Lord’s going to lose not * He’s going to win * So listen to Him. * This ain’t no game – this ain’t no game Jesus is done playing games – this is serious business, if ultimately you refuse the Spirit of God call to believe in Jesus, there is no forgiveness of sins left.

Ultimately that is what I believe the unpardonable sin to be – a final and forever repudiation of Jesus Christ. All other sins will be forgiven, but when this life is over – what really will matter is whether you have believed on the name of Jesus Christ. “It Ain’t No Game.” So my view, theologically, is that if you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have lost the ability to commit the unpardonable sin – ultimately this is the sin of a non-believer who rejects Jesus Christ, and hardens his or her heart against the truth

that has been given to them. That is why we must share our faith, and proclaim the gospel clearly and often.

Jesus Family – Part II, 31-35

Now we return to the story of Jesus' family – [Mark 3:31](#). Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent *word* to Him and called Him. [Mark 3:32](#) A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.” There they are – ready to practice tough love, and Jesus respond with another very uncomfortable statement. [Mark 3:33](#) Answering them, He *said, “Who are My mother and My brothers?” [Mark 3:34](#) Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! [Mark 3:35](#) “For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

Jesus is teaching us that the relationship that has priority is the relationship with God and God's people. Ultimately the story of Christianity is not about you or your family – it is about Him and His family. He turns to the crowd – people he likely barely knew and said, “My mother, my brothers!” This is a radical redefinition of the family, in a culture where family was central. But to those who have been persecuted and rejected by their earthly family, this passage have provided hope and comfort throughout the ages.

David Gyertson, the former president of Asbury and Taylor Colleges was abandoned by his family when he was 10, and his mother forced him to leave home at the age of 13. His life was turned around when he was taken in by a humble pastor who shared with him the good news of [Psalm 27:10](#), “Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.” Commentator David Garland wrote, “If the church takes seriously Jesus' ideal

of what the family is, one of its tasks is to create and nurture families that make a place for all those who want a relationship with God as Father and with one another. This requires more than sharing a pew on Sunday morning and a fellowship doughnut afterward. Instead, we are to allow these persons to become our parents, our children, our siblings. We are to adopt one another, accepting responsibility for and commitment to one another. The church is to take those who know the hurt of the world and bring them into the healing of community acceptance.” (Garland, 148-149) That is the church – the family of Christ.

Application

Our lesson this morning is that of Jesus’ family believing He is crazy and the story of the Scribes believing he is possessed by Satan. What application can we take from this passage for this week? First, Be Chicken Little. Ring the bell of the gospel without being ashamed no matter what people might conclude about you. You believe and love a God who is invisible – yet you know He has changed your life. He has given you faith – and not a blind faith, but a faith based on a historic religion. You can’t see God, but there is evidence abounding in archaeology, science and philosophy that support the Christian faith. Remember this morning, you are not sounding a false alarm. The message is true.

Second – Come into the Chicken Coop (the church). Chicken Little, in the Disney movie, had a group of close friends, who became believers with him – and together shared in the adventure. If you have wandered from the coop, which is the church – come back home. Here you have mothers, and fathers and brothers and sisters in abundance. Here you can find safety under God’s wing – the Psalmist said. **Psalm 57:1: “For my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by.”**

Under God's wing with God's people you can endure rejection and being misunderstood.

And then as the song says: "Just a few more weary days and then – I'll Fly away. To a land where joys shall never end – I'll fly away. But not yet – God has plans for you still. Be

Chicken Little – Stay in the Coop. Let's pray.