

Bible study on Mark 3.20-35

Begin with an opening prayer

Loving Lord, you look us in the eye
and remind us that we are already part of your family.
Help us to let go of anything that gets in the way,
that we may love you with all our hearts,
and whole-heartedly love all our neighbours.
Amen.

Read the passage

Explore and respond to the text

Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.

Bible notes

This passage calls us to be brave in facing the conflict that can arise in response to one who brings God's blessing to others. In the early part of chapter three, Jesus healed many people, but he also called out the religious leaders in the synagogue on their legalism – they cared more about sabbath regulations than they did about the health of a worshipper. His question – 'Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?' (v.4) – has an obvious answer, but they resist it. They now see Jesus as their enemy. What happens next is very instructive. It is impossible to claim that the deeds of Jesus are not powerful, so they assert a conspiracy theory for the source of his power: 'He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.' Don't trust him, this is all a con, his power is evil – this sounds just like a comment on social media rubbishing an individual or a movement! And it reminds us that there is nothing new under the sun. Hatred will always find a cover story and a way to dismiss the truth rather than respond to it. Jesus responds to them with logic and a warning. He points out that their accusation makes no sense, but that in closing their hearts and minds to the voice of God, they are risking their ability to listen to God in the future. After all, if the Holy Spirit is 'an unclean spirit', who is left to call us to repentance? Jesus' family members also spark a conflict, this time through their desire to protect him and keep him safe within their circle of identity. Yet Jesus resists their claims too. Creating a new community to serve God is his only criterion for his mission.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

A house divided against itself cannot stand. Central to Jesus' ministry was the vocation to oppose Satan and heal people of evil spirits. The undermining, destabilising effects of evil spirits on individuals and communities comes in many guises: the subtle voice of the serpent to Adam and Eve; the derisory voices suggesting Jesus was crazy; the accusing voices of the Scribes from Jerusalem; the ashamed voices of Jesus' family. Social media is known to compound negative mental health issues in impressionable young people. What are the voices that undermine our own communities and how do we confront them like Jesus?

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



- How does this image make you feel?
- How did you experience the building up of community at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What did you experience or observe that had the opposite effect?

Prayer

A prayer of praise

God of all the world,
we praise you for calling us into your family,
for choosing us even though we are imperfect,
for trusting us even though we make mistakes,
for not giving up on us even when we give up on ourselves,
for offering so much more – even when we would settle for less.

God of all the world,
for drawing us into a deeper relationship with you and with one another,
we praise you –
individually and together,
we praise you.

Amen.

A prayer to end the Bible study

Loving God,
you sent your Son into your world
to gather us all up into your kingdom.
Be with us, as we hear and respond to your call to do the same.

Amen.