

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

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Mark 3:1-12, 20-35

“Do You Accept or Reject Jesus?”

Intro. In v.29 Jesus warned of “eternal condemnation.” One sin against a holy God is enough to condemn you. What’s really bad is that if your sins are not forgiven, you will experience “eternal condemnation.” How long is eternal? Imagine if you were required to go to beaches of Florida, and you had to pick up and carry each grain of sand to Georgia. By the time you removed even one cubic yard of sand, eternity would have just begun.

We’re going to see that Jesus does not want anyone to experience eternal condemnation. Can He save you from your sins? Can He bring forgiveness to your soul? I believe He can, for I want to show you from this passage of Scripture that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Yet many do not believe in Him. So we are also going to examine the problem of unbelief, and see if there is any validity to those who reject Jesus.

So who is right? Christians or unbelievers? If you are not a believer, if you reject Jesus as Savior, then you had better be right. Eternity is too long to be wrong. To help you decide, I want to share first of all:

## I. WHY WE SHOULD BELIEVE IN JESUS

The gospel of Mark begins with the proclamation that Jesus is the Son of God. This third chapter supports that assertion. Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, as indicated by the following truths:

A. Because Jesus Performed Many Miracles – The Jews had read in their ancient Scriptures that prophets of old worked miracles, largely to authenticate that their message was from God. But it had been centuries since miracles had been seen in Israel. But now, a prophet of God had arisen with miracle-working power, and there was great excitement in Israel. But in the case of Jesus, He did far more miracles than any prophet of old. Clearly, He was more than a prophet. As we shall see, He is the Son of God! As we move into the third chapter of Mark, we read of two more accounts of amazing miracles. First of all:

1. Jesus Heals the Man with the Withered Hand – Evidently Jesus was given another opportunity to teach in the synagogue. So we read in v.1, “And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand.” Normally, the word translated “withered” refers to a plant that has withered due to drought. I can imagine this man’s hand was visibly withered, limp, unable to function in a normal way. After Jesus invited the man to step forward from the crowd, He said in the last of v.5, “Stretch out your hand.” Then Mark reports that “he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.” The man simply obeyed our Lord’s command, stretched out his hand, and was instantly healed.

Obviously, one main purpose for this miracle has already been indicated: to give evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. But Jesus had another purpose. You see, Jesus deliberately healed a man on the Sabbath Day. Certainly He could have waited one more day, but once again He wanted to challenge the Pharisaical legalistic traditions. Besides, notice the point Jesus makes in v.4, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” Since evil is at work every

day, including the Sabbath Day, why should good not be at work as well? Death is always at work, but that should not hinder us from seeking to save life. Also, because the Sabbath is made for man, and because He is the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath.

Though we need a day of rest each week, that should not keep us from doing good on Sunday, or whatever day of rest you set aside. Christ went about doing good, and we should follow His example (cf. 1 Peter 2:21). So no Christian need ever hesitate to do a really good work on a Sunday. A real work of mercy, such as ministering to the sick or relieving pain, may always be done without scruple.

2. Jesus Healed Many Others – In v.10 we read, “For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him.” Later in chapters 5 & 6 we see examples of the fact that people were healed just by touching the garment of Jesus (cf. Mt. 14:36 also). Mark impresses us in this chapter, not so much by placing the microscope on certain incidents, but by letting us look through the telescope at the multitudes He healed. The Gospels relate to us only a few of the specific examples of His healing of “the many”.

Even His enemies acknowledged that Jesus had great power. In v.2 we read, “So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath...” They knew He could miraculously heal. That is why they were watching Him on this occasion. They knew that His miracles were not tricks. Then in v.22 His enemies said, “By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.” They acknowledged that He had the power to cast out demons, though they attributed that power to the wrong source.

Surely Jesus is the Son of God. How else can you explain such power? Furthermore, we know Jesus is the Son of God:

B. Because Jesus Was So Great, He Was Followed by Multitudes of People – There is a law of science that applies here. A great effect must have a great cause. Even so, the fact that Jesus had such huge crowds following Him must be due to His divine greatness. You see, no matter where He went God’s servant was thronged by excited crowds. As you can see from vv.7-8, they were coming from all over. If you note these places and look them up on a map, you will find they cover the entire area. In vv. 8b-9 we read that “a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him.” Then in v.20 we read, “Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.” The house was so crowded they could not even recline to eat. Likewise, v.32 says, “a multitude was sitting around Him,” so much so that His family was standing on the outside of the house, & evidently could not get in.

How can you explain such huge crowds, unless He did in fact perform many miracles? He must have also been a great teacher. He must have been the Son of God! This is just one more evidence why we should believe in Him!

C. Because Jesus Was Even Affirmed by Demons – In v.11 we read, “And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, “You are the Son of God.” Of course, Jesus did not want or need the affirmation of demons, as we see in v.12. But the fact that Mark records their words indicates that additional testimony that Jesus is the Son of God.

Now in spite of the overwhelming evidence just presented, we also see in this text of Scripture the fact that:

## II. MANY REJECTED JESUS

Now let's consider together some examples of this rejection. Our Lord's enemies are beginning to watch for some little flimsy excuse whereby they might bring a charge against Him. And they are not going to have long to wait.

A. He Was Rejected for Healing on the Sabbath – As His enemies were watching Him closely, we read in v.5 that Jesus “looked around at them with anger.” It is plain from these words that there is an “anger” which is lawful, right and not sinful. There is an indignation which is justifiable, and on some occasions may properly be displayed. But we must be very careful here, lest our anger lead to sin (Ephesians 4:26). Why was He angry? It was because He could see “the hardening of their hearts.” Their minds were made up. There was no way they would do anything but reject Him for healing on the Sabbath. They would rather protect their traditions than see a man blessed with healing! They put tradition & their own position ahead of love & compassion. This grieved Jesus. The present tense indicates that Jesus was experiencing continuing grief.

Yet Jesus did not want this man's suffering to continue another day, so He healed him, even though it was the Sabbath. So incensed were the Pharisees over what Jesus had done that we read in v.6 that they united with the Herodians and started making plans to arrest Jesus and destroy Him. The Herodians were not a religious party; they were a group of Jews who were sympathetic to King Herod and supported his rule. It was surprising that the Pharisees, who were strict Jews, would join themselves with these disloyal politicians. But it was a common enemy that brought the two groups together. These bloodhounds of hate got on His trail and they never let up until they folded their arms beneath the cross of Christ. So while they had accused Jesus of working on the Sabbath, they were doing something far worse: they were hating & plotting evil on the Sabbath!

I wonder how often we anger & grieve the heart of Jesus when we cling to man-made traditions, all the while ignoring the needs of others outside the church?

Not only was Jesus rejected by His enemies, but:

B. He Was Even Rejected by His Friends & Family – At this point in our Lord's ministry, His friends were sure that He was confused, and possibly deranged. His demanding schedule, and the rise of opposition against Him, convinced them that He desperately needed help. He simply was not living a normal life, so His friends came to Capernaum to “take charge of Him.” In v.21 we read, “But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, ‘He is out of His mind.’” Then we see in v.31 that his mother<sup>1</sup> and “brethren” (6:3) traveled thirty miles from Nazareth. They heard about His demanding schedule, and how He so thronged with crowds that He was hardly able to eat. Our Lord's half brothers were not believers at this time (John 7:1-5). So they evidently came to plead with Him to come home and get some rest. He was to be shielded from the crowd of followers, and from the plots of scribes, by being kept at home and treated as a harmless lunatic. But even they were unable to get near Him.

We should certainly not agree with them! If a man devotes his life to a noble but earthly cause, he is applauded. The Musician, the athlete, the businessman, the artist, the statesman who gives himself to his work is recognized for his total devotion. But all who are completely committed to God and spiritual truth will be considered fools or crazy by carnal minded people. The prophet who came to anoint Jehu was called a “madman” (2 Kings 9:11). Paul wrote, “We are

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<sup>1</sup> Here we see that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was an excellent and honorable character, but evidently not perfect. She is entitled to great estimation, but surely not to religious confidence and worship.

fools for Christ's sake." Elsewhere Paul was called mad (Acts 26:24-25). D.L Moody was called "Crazy Moody" by many people in Chicago.

Have you demonstrated enough commitment to God that anyone has considered you a bit crazy? Some who express religious zeal are crazy, & need help, but certainly not all. Over time Jesus demonstrated that He was very much in control of Himself.

C. He Was Slandered by the Scribes – We have seen that the enemies of Jesus had to acknowledge that He could work miracles of healing. They also had to acknowledge that He could cast out demons. So instead of attributing this power to God, they had to come up with some other explanation. In v.22 we read, "And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebub,' and, 'By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.'" Jesus healed a demoniac who was both blind and dumb (Matt. 12:22-24). The crowd was saying "Perhaps this man is indeed the Son of David, the Messiah." But the religious leaders said, "No, he is in league with Beelzebub! It is Satan's power that is at work in Him, not God's power." The preposterous explanation that He cast out demons by Beelzebub is the very last resort of hatred so deep that it will father an absurdity rather than accept the truth. This explanation is an instance of the credulity of unbelief. It is more difficult to believe the explanation than the alternative. Christ cannot be explained by anything but the admission of His divine nature. The difficulties of faith are "gnats" beside the "camels" which unbelief has to swallow.

The fact that Jesus was rejected by so many should not sway us. The Prophet Isaiah predicted, "He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of Sorrows..." (53:3). So even though there is strong evidence that Jesus is the Son of God, we should not be surprised that Jesus was persecuted & rejected by many.

Christ's people must not expect to fare better than their Master. We are always watched by an ill-natured and spiteful world. We are unfairly slandered. It is good for all Christians to keep this before our minds. Wherever we go, and whatever we do, let us remember that, like our Master, we are "watched." The thought should make us be careful to do nothing to cause the enemy to blaspheme. It should make us diligent to avoid even the "appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22, KJV). And just as our Master was not turned aside from His mission by persecution, neither should we.

Now you have heard both sides of the issue. I have presented the evidences that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior sent from God. I have also presented the fact that many did not believe in Him, and even sought to justify their unbelief. Where do you stand when it comes to Jesus? Have you accepted Him, or have you joined others in rejecting Him? If you rejected Jesus, if you have haven't decided to follow Him, the last thing I want you to do is:

### III. CONSIDER THE APPEALS OF JESUS

Jesus generally did not ignore His critics. Instead, He often responded to them, exposing their faulty logic.

A. Consider the Appeal of His Wisdom – If Jesus is the Son of God, we would expect that He would be able to handle His critics with great wisdom. He does so here. Notice what He said when He was accused of casting out demons by the prince of demons. He said in vv.23-26, "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 cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself,

and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end.” If it was by the power of Satan that He had cast out the demon, then Satan was actually fighting against himself. As the proverb has it, “Hawks do not pick out hawks eyes.” This meant that Satan’s house and kingdom were divided and therefore on the verge of collapse. His critics were so blinded by hatred that they were shown to be fools.

Instead of this miracle proving that Jesus was on the side of Satan, it actually demonstrated just the opposite. He said in v.27, “No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.” The prince of the demons regards the souls of men who have not yielded themselves to God as his “goods”. Satan had been guarding that man carefully because the devil does not want to lose any of his territory. Jesus declares that the lord of the house must be bound before his property can be taken from him. The fact that Jesus delivered the man was proof that He was stronger than Satan and that Satan could not stop Him. Thus, Christ has broken the power of evil in its central hold. He has crushed the serpent’s head. He was manifested “that He might destroy the words of the devil.”

Oh sinner, you can be free from the kingdom of darkness by turning to Jesus, who is far greater.

B. Consider the Appeal of His Compassion - Jesus did much more than answer their false accusation. His patient heart overflows in pity for the reckless slanderers, and He warns them that they are coming near the edge of a precipice. He said in vv. 28-29, “Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation.” Jesus warned the Jewish religious leaders that they were committing the sin of blasphemy. Blasphemy is, in form, injurious speaking, and in essence, it is scornful or malignant antagonism. But the most serious point about this is that they were in danger of committing an eternal and unforgivable sin (Matt. 12:32). He did not want them to suffer such a fate.

We must also see the positive truth in what Jesus is saying. We see the loving compassion of God in the heart of Jesus when He made it clear that God would forgive all sin and all blasphemy, including blasphemy against the very Son of God Himself! (Matt. 12:32). Let not the terrible picture of the depths of impenitence to which a soul may fall, obscure the blessed universality of the declaration from Christ’s lips which precludes it. Jesus said in v.28, “Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter.” Christ died for all sin. There is no such thing as being able to commit a sin today that he will not forgive. No matter how deep the stain, whosoever will can come and be sure of pardon. To the person who is alive to his own sinfulness and is deeply aware of his need of mercy, these words are sweet and precious indeed. The blood of Christ can cleanse away all sin, even the sins of the persecutor of the church, or the sins of the adulterer, or even the sins of the murderer. This implies that forgiveness is free to all by God’s grace.

How can a murderer earn his forgiveness? (Cf. Acts 13:39). Of course, he cannot. So whether your sin is small or great, let us take hold of this blessed doctrine without delay.

C. Consider the Warning of His Divine Justice – Jesus warned in v.29, “he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation.” Eternal condemnation points to the reality of eternal hell for those who do not receive the forgiveness of sin.

Why would a sin against God the Son be forgivable and yet a sin against the Holy Spirit be unforgivable? The answer lies in the nature of God and in His patient dealings with the nation of

Israel. The religious leaders permitted John to be arrested and be eventually killed. God the Son came as promised and called the nation to trust Him, but those same religious leaders asked for Jesus to be killed.

They were expressing an attitude of unbelief which was permanent rejection of Christ. The sin can only be the culmination of a long course of self-hardening (v.5) and depraving! Their spiritual state had become so bad that they were attributing to the devil the works of the Holy Spirit. It is unforgivable, because the soul which can recognize God's revelation of Himself in all His goodness and moral perfection, and be stirred only to hatred thereby, has reached a dreadful climax of hardness, and has ceased to be capable of being influenced by His beseeching. The sin is unforgiven, because the sinner is fixed in impenitence, and his stiffened will cannot bow to receive pardon.

The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and demonstrated God's power in man, convicting many of their sin, and the truth of the Gospel. Yet how did those same religious leaders respond? By arresting the apostles, ordering them to keep silent, and then killing Stephen themselves. Stephen told them what their sin was; "You always resist the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7:51). They had sinned against the Father and the Son, but had been graciously forgiven. When they sinned against the Holy Spirit, they had reached "the end of the line" and there could be no more forgiveness.

Historically speaking this was all true. But this does not really answer the question, "How do we today blaspheme the Spirit of God?" What miracle is the Holy Spirit performing today that might be carelessly or even deliberately attributed to Satan? Must a person see a miracle in order to commit this terrible sin? Fear that it has been committed is proof positive that it has not; for, if it has been, there will be no relenting in enmity, nor any wish for deliverance.

People today cannot commit the "unpardonable sin" in the same way the Jewish religious leaders did when Jesus was ministering on earth. The only sin today that God cannot forgive is rejection of His Son (John 3:16-21, 31). When the Spirit of God convicts the sinner and reveals the Savior, the sinner may resist the Spirit and reject the witness of the Word of God, but that does not mean he had forfeited all his opportunities to be saved. Only God knows if and when any "deadline" had been crossed. God has mercifully ordered that we can never decide positively about any person that they have committed a sin which cannot be forgiven.

Conclusion: So even though Jesus was rejected, persecuted, & even put to death by the leaders of Israel, should you reject Jesus as well? Certainly not! Jesus was demonstrated to be the Son of God by many amazing miracles. He was so great that He was followed by huge crowds from all over. He was even acknowledged by demons. He manifested the wisdom of God. He manifested the compassion of God. He also affirmed the justice of God. Clearly He manifested the attributes of God in many different ways.

Will you believe in Him? Or will you reject Him? Don't harden your heart. Believe in Jesus & receive the forgiveness of sin that He promises.

Sources: Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), *Mark: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).