

JESUS

#UNFILTERED

THE GOSPEL OF MARK
MEET JESUS UNFILTERED



MARK: Jesus Unfiltered

Stronger - Mark 3:20-35

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders, please use these questions **as a guide for discussion**. Please don't feel like you have to go through every one!)

Connect: Is there anything for which you need to ask God's forgiveness? How can you demonstrate God's forgiveness this week?

Warm-Up

1. Why do you think the question "Who do you say Jesus is?" is so central to Mark's Gospel and to Christian faith?
2. What expectations or assumptions do people often bring to Jesus today? If you were to ask your non-christian family or friends who they thought Jesus is, what do you think they would say?

Read Mark 3:22-27

3. What accusation do the scribes make against Jesus, and why is it so serious? Why do you think the scribes could not deny Jesus' power, only reinterpret its source?
4. How does Jesus' "house divided" argument expose the logical problem with their claim?
5. In verses 27-28, who is the strong man in the parable? How is Jesus pointing to himself as the stronger man who will set the captives free? What have been the clues already that Jesus will defeat evil?
6. How does Jesus defeat Satan, and when will Satan be ultimately defeated?
7. In what ways do people today still explain away Jesus' work rather than submit to it?
8. In the face of evil or injustice, how might the news of Jesus being the *Strongest Man* bring us comfort?
9. Have you ever been worried about verse 28? What does it actually mean to 'blaspheme against the Holy Spirit'? Why was Jesus speaking this word of warning to those who were present?

Read Mark 3:20-21 & 3:31-35

10. How does Jesus' family interpret his actions, and what might have motivated their response?
11. Jesus' family must have thought that they knew him. They thought that they were 'insiders'. Why is it uncomfortable to consider that Jesus' own family misunderstood him?
12. Why doesn't the idea of Jesus as merely a "good moral teacher" actually work?
13. What did Jesus mean by 'whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother'? How is this an incredible promise to all who follow Jesus, especially regarding his unconditional love?
14. Why is acknowledging Jesus as Lord more than intellectual agreement?
15. Where might you be tempted to limit, reshape, or domesticate Jesus rather than trust him as the Stronger Man?
16. Which response to Jesus—liar, lunatic, or Lord—do you have today?

Apply: How might trusting in Jesus as the Strong Man shape any decisions you make this week?

PRAY: Heavenly Father, we thank you that Jesus is the strong man with authority over evil and over everything. Help us to recognise him as Lord over every area of our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

TITLE: JESUS - Stronger

PASSAGE: Mark 3:20-35

LOCATION: St John's Wishart 9AM

BI: Jesus is the strong man who has come to do away with evil.

STRUCTURE:

- Liar - 3:22-27
 - Lunatic - 3:20-21; 31-32
 - Lord - 3:33-35
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- The most important question that you'll ever have to decide in your life is this:
 - Who do you say Jesus is?
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- That's the question at the heart of Mark and at the heart of these verses today.
 - That's the question that we've been exploring and trying to figure out over these past weeks
 - It's the most important and fundamental question that you will have to answer for yourself.
 - It will be life-changing now, and eternity changing!
 - And this is what we see two different groups - Jesus' Family and the Religious Leaders - wrestling with.
 - These groups thought that they knew Jesus and had him figured out. They thought they could constrain him and demean him...But once again, Jesus defies expectations...
 - What we'll see is that Jesus is the Strong Man - the Lord of all, who has come to drive away evil and call us back to himself.
 - Mark does this by giving us what we call a sandwich.
 - Mark does this a few times in his gospel. He begins with one group or one concept - moves on to a different concept - and then returns to the first one.
 - He does this to communicate a larger concept and idea as well as the details.
 - In V20-21 - he talks about Jesus' interaction with his family; in 22-30 he talks about the interaction with the religious leaders and gurus; in 31-35 he then returns to another interaction with his family.
 - So today like any modern restaurant serves, we're going to eat this sandwich a bit deconstructed.
 - We're going to look at what the religious gurus said about Jesus, then we're going to look at his family, and then we'll take a step back and try and see the broader picture of what Mark is trying to tell us about Jesus.
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- **Firstly - the Religious gurus. The scribes.**
 - **And they thought that Jesus was BAD.**
 - Now we have to remember, that in the first century, the bog standard people a) couldn't really read and b) didn't have easy access to the religious texts of the Israelites (The Old Testament). They didn't have an old testament on their phones and in their bookshelf at home in multiple translations
 - They needed people to read aloud and let them know what to do and how to relate to God.
 - But some did have access. There were some people who were thoroughly trained in reading Hebrew (which is the language of the Old Testament) and were the keepers and the interpreters of the scrolls of the books.
 - And not only interpreters, but they were forensic in their knowledge of it, and were often almost lawyer like in their interpretations of it.
 - These people were called the scribes.
 - They don't like Jesus because they didn't think that he was the Messiah.
 - They thought he was a liar trying to stir up trouble - they thought he was crumbling their authority as the 'teachers of the law'
 - So now - the scribes come down to Jesus in order to confront him...

- And remember by this point - Jesus has worked many miracles, healed lots of people, has freed people from demon possession and from evil spirits. He's shown undeniable evidence that he had some sort of authority over evil...
- But this is what they say:
- V22 "And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons."
- What the scribes are essentially saying here is that Jesus' miracles don't happen by his own power, but he is working for Satan - the root of all evil.
- They're saying that Jesus himself is possessed!
 - It's a bit hard for scholars to work out what is meant by Beelzebul - the closest that we can probably get to an idea is that it's a reference to a deity called Baal. It could be "Baal the prince"
 - Baal was the main rival cult that drew people away from the proper worship of God in the times of the Old Testament.
- But essentially they are saying that Jesus is working in opposition to God!
- Notice - they can't deny his miracles or his authority - but
- They look at the evidence in the face, and pretty much kick an own goal with it!
- Because logically - this doesn't make sense.
 - *I used to watch a show called 'Suits' - it covers a fictional law-firm in New York and the leaders and power struggles within the firm.*
 - *And it was always the case that when there was factional in-fighting within the firm, the firm would start to go downhill...when they all stood united - they would go really well.*
 - *It's the same with kingdoms throughout history - they grow big, people become power hungry, try to claim power, and then the whole thing turns to pieces...*
 - *It's the same thing in politics - like the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd, Abbot-Turnbull-Morrison era of Australian politics - a house divided cannot stand!*
- And well - this is where that phrase comes from!
- Jesus says - are you kidding? Just use your brains and simple logic - what benefit would it be for Satan to send an agent to work against...satan?
- V23 "and he called them to him and said 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 is coming to an end."
- If Jesus came as a lying, con-artist, agent of evil - then he wouldn't be doing a very good job of it...because he's been hindering the work of Satan, by removing the spirits from Satan from people!
- The evil and demonic seek to destroy and harm and maim people - but Jesus came to release people from these spirits..
- He came as the **stronger man** to defeat evil.
- Jesus continues in V27 "But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house."
- Jesus uses a parable or an image to teach - as we'll look at more closely next week.
- But think about it - if you wanted to rob someone or defeat them - it would be a good idea to tie them up or work them down a bit - get them weary and tired. Tie them up.
 - *Shane Warne is probably the second greatest Australian cricketer ever - maybe apart from Don Bradman...*

- *And he was so good, because he knew how to get players out. He knew how to work a batter over over the course of his six deliveries. How to get them thinking, get into their heads, and get them tired and weary -*
- *And then he went for the wicket delivery and got them out 5 times out of 10.*
- *He was almost always the stronger man!!*
- Well - Jesus has come to be the stronger man, to bind up Satan and to ultimately defeat him.
- That's why Mark writes down a lot of Jesus' exorcisms; this is Jesus not working for Satan - but restraining him and driving him out; and it's not a fierce battle - but Jesus simply speaks and evil obeys.
- Jesus is the STRONGER man - the STRONGEST man - who has come to rescue humanity from evil, from Satan, from his reign of death - to bring us into Jesus' reign of life!
- He isn't a liar, he isn't bad - no Jesus is the king of all - come to forgive sins..
- V28 “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”
- Now before we tackle the second half - here these words again - all sins of the world, whatever we have done in the past, or thought about God in the past - these can be forgiven..
- Anything!
- Apart from one.
- Blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.
- This concept of the unforgivable sin is mentioned a couple of times in the bible. And people have tried to nail it down - but on balance, here this sin that can't be forgiven is saying that Jesus' power comes from evil!
- Cutting yourself off from the live giver, not accepting his forgiveness but instead believing that Jesus is evil - leads to having that sin unforgiven!
- If people look Jesus in the face, encounter grace and forgiveness, hear about it - but declare it to be evil and walk away from it - then that's worrying.
- Now - if you're here and thinking “Maybe I've done this sin” - please be assured, that the fact that you are worrying about it is a good sign that you haven't!
- Because Jesus is the strong man who has come to get rid of evil! To defeat sin and death. To bind up Satan who is currently in chains - and then will throw him into the sea when he returns to finally get rid of evil and death.
- He is binding up Satan in the exorcisms, he is defeating him in his death and resurrection, and will return to deliver the final blow.
- Maybe you're here and haven't necessarily been demon possessed, but have felt the effects of evil and death. You may have experienced a great injustice in your life - whether in the workplace, from a friend, or family members; you may have felt the effects of your physical abilities reducing; perhaps you've experienced the grief that comes from a loved one dying...
 - You turn on the TV news and watch in grief at the state of the world.
- These are all the effects of sin in the world, and evil in the world.
- But remember, that Jesus is the stronger one who has come to put an end to this evil.
- He's not lying, he's not bad, he's not evil - he is the Lord of all with authority over evil.
- **But neither is he MAD...**
- This is what his family thinks of him V20 “Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. 21 And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.””

- And then after the incident with the scribes:
- V31 “And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.”
- We know from passages like these that Mary and Joseph had more kids after Jesus - at least a couple of sisters and a few brothers. By this point, it’s possible that Joseph has died.
- And they see their brother doing all these miracles, teaching all that he did, getting more and more popular - and they weighed it up and came to the conclusion that he was delusional! They thought he was Mad...

- Firstly - they try to grab him and take him by the hand and take him home...possibly because they thought that with all his doings and crazy sayings, he was bringing shame upon their whole household...he might have been embarrassing them!!
- And then - they come back to him and get others to go and get Jesus and bring him outside..
 - *I know I’ve been an annoying and embarrassing younger sibling to my brother. I can remember distinctly a few times when I embarrassed him at school...*
 - *I’m sure that he would have loved to have me taken away...taken home!*
- And same thing here.
 - Jesus is claiming to be from God
 - He is claiming the same authority as God; people are saying that he is the messiah - and he is not denying it...
 - If these things weren’t true - then he is a lunatic! He is mad!
 - One of the things which people get clearly wrong about Jesus - is just believing that he was a good moralistic teacher. That he was a wise guy, had some good advice and things to follow. He had good things to say...good teachings to follow - but nothing more.
 - But this can’t be right. Because in other gospels - we get Jesus saying things like “I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except through me”; “I am the bread of life”; he refers to himself as the Son of Man (a title used for the Messiah) a number of times...
 - IF you’re just a moralistic teacher - you don’t say this type of stuff...unless he’s actually telling the truth.
 - So Jesus either has delusions of grandeur or is actually who he said he is!
- But his family think he’s gone nuts. They think that the pressure has got to him, the crowds are making him believe his own lies - and Jesus has just cracked and maybe has a mental breakdown.
- They think he’s mad. A lunatic.
- But he’s not mad at all.

- **He is actually who he said he is - he is the Lord of all.**
- When people came to Jesus saying that his family was looking for him, this is what he had to say:
 - V33 “And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”
- He is from God.
- Whoever does the will of God - and as we saw a couple of weeks ago, that is to repent and believe in the good news of Jesus - then they are part of Jesus’ real family.
- Whoever confesses and acknowledges that Jesus is the Lord of all - that Jesus really is who he said he is - is part of the kingdom!
- The outsiders can get brought in...the sinner welcomed and forgiven...and evil will be done away with.

- If we take a step back at this mark sandwich and have a look at the whole of it - it's interesting that the people who thought they were in the 'in crowd' had it completely wrong.
 - His family were wrong about him thinking he was a lunatic; the religious experts of the law were wrong in thinking that was a liar and evil...
 - These are the crew who you would expect to have it right about Jesus!
 - But the insiders were actually wrong - and are put on the outside. The people who were so confident in themselves and their own expectations of Jesus were wrong...
 - And the same thing happens today
 - There are people who may have been going to church all their life - but have it wrong about Jesus.
 - Cradle Anglicans who have actually never truly repented and believed.
 - People who claim the banner of Christianity but use it for evil and use it for power and position. They have it wrong about Jesus!
 - People who think they are insiders...but are actually on the out!
 - But the outsiders who acknowledge Jesus as Lord, and turn to him...ALL sin can be forgiven, all types of blasphemy can be forgiven - and so the outsider can be brought in through Jesus
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- But closer to home...
 - Sometimes we can have the audacity to constrain Jesus or restrict him and try and make Jesus in our own image.
 - We can treat him as a role model, we can segregate portions of our lives - instead of making him Lord of all - who is the strong one to take away sin and all evil in our lives...
 - Friend - return to the Lord.
 - And acknowledge him as your lord and saviour over all your life...
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- Who do you say Jesus is? The spotlight is on you.