

## "The Great Divide" - Mark 3:7-35

A great divide exists, a great chasm that divides humanity. You are either on one side of the divide or the other. You cannot straddle the line. And your position will be forever sealed when you stand before the Judgment Seat of God. You are either written in the Lamb's Book of Life, or you are destined for an eternity in Hell. You need to be on the right side of the divide. You need to be found standing with Jesus.

We're going to bite off a pretty large chunk of scripture this morning. I want to read the entire passage to you first, and then we'll drill down just a little bit. But as I read and as you follow along in your Bibles, I want you to look for something. I want you to look for not two, but three different classifications of people. Look for a distinction between these groups based on their relationship with Jesus Christ. What do they think of Jesus? How do they respond to Jesus?

Now, I admit that the distinctions are a little bit subjective, but they are not arbitrary. Two of these groups are standing on the wrong side of the Great Divide, but there is still hope for one of those groups. Let's see what you come up with as we read.

- **Read Mark 3:7-35**

Were you able to come up with three categories of people? Maybe you actually found more. If you did, you're a splitter! Maybe you could only find two. That makes you a lumper.

Well, let me share my three categories. In this passage, I see people who are fully committed to Jesus. They are all in. They are willing to follow Jesus wherever He leads. Nothing is more important than their relationship with their Lord. I also see people who are fully committed to destroying Jesus. Good luck with that! How are you going to prevail against God? But that doesn't mean they aren't going to try. Finally, I see people who really, really like Jesus, but they aren't yet able to accept His teaching. They believe in Jesus, but they don't really believe Jesus.

Which of these three are you? I want you to examine yourself this morning. But first a word of warning: don't fall into the trap of trying to examine everyone else. Don't trust your ability to place folks in the right box. We are notoriously bad at judging people's motives, intents. We cannot read hearts! So, let's let God be the judge when it comes to other people.

This is more about looking into the mirror and taking your own spiritual temperature. What do you really think about Jesus? How do you respond to Jesus? Are you really all-in for Jesus? Are you willing to be obedient to His commands?

First, let's notice that Jesus is experiencing incredible popularity here.

*But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. (Mark 3:7-8)*

He couldn't even withdraw to have a little quiet time with His closest disciples.

*So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. (Mark 3:9)*

He had to have an escape plan.

Remember Beatlemania? Back in the 60s when young fans were so desperate to get close to their idols that they had to go to great lengths to ensure the musician's safety. It got so bad that they finally felt they had to stop performing in public. Well, this was the same dynamic taken to the next order of magnitude. But despite the danger and inconvenience, He continued to serve. He was healing people. He was casting out demons and ordering the demons to shut up about Him.

But as we read elsewhere, Jesus wasn't ready to commit Himself to these fans. John writes:

*But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. (John 2:24-25)*

The vast majority of those folks were fans, but not followers. But within that greater group, there were individuals who had committed themselves. These were His true disciples. From among them, He chose twelve, twelve very ordinary men. They weren't religious scholars. They weren't even particularly pious. One would prove to be a traitor. But Jesus chose them. They're listed here in verses 16 through 19.

After choosing them, He gave them a job to do and He gave them the power to do it.

*Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: (Mark 3:14-15)*

If you are fully committed to Jesus, He will give you a job to do. He will call you to ministry. Most folks don't get called to a pulpit ministry, but all true believers are equipped by the Holy Spirit to bear fruit for the Kingdom. And when Jesus calls, it is your duty to respond. When Jesus sends, you have to go. Like the Hymn says: "Wherever He leads, I'll go." Have you made that level of commitment? It is what is required of a true disciple.

*Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (Matthew 16:24-25)*

Now, Jesus calls most of you to a ministry right where you are, right here at Canyon Community Church, here within the sphere of your influence, at your job, in your home, among your friends. Chances are, you won't be called to leave your home to become a missionary in Tibet, but He might. If you are fully committed to Jesus, you need to go wherever He leads you to go.

So, the first group of people we see in this passage are those who are fully committed to Jesus. They are followers and disciples, not just fans. They strive diligently for obedience. But until the coming Day of the Lord, there will also be individuals who are fully committed to destroying Jesus. These folks hate the gospel of Christ. Their hearts are so hardened, so ossified, that they simply cannot come to saving faith. Despite the fact that the evidence is overwhelming and right there in front of them, they will persist in their unbelief and they will try to drag others to hell with them.

Look again at verse 22.

*And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons." (Mark 3:22)*

I'll remind you that the scribes were the intellectual elites of the day. They were completely versed in the Jewish scriptures. They knew the Law. They also knew the Jewish rabbinic tradition, which they thought was even more important than scripture. They weren't big fans of miracles, but they couldn't deny that Jesus performed astounding miracles. Nobody could deny it; the evidence was all around them. So, instead they came up with this theory. "He's working for Satan! That's how he does all this stuff." They were calling Jesus a devil!

Look again at Jesus' response:

*So He called them to Himself 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 cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. (Mark 3:23-26)*

Jesus called them out. What they were asserting made no sense at all. Their argument was foolish. It was completely illogical, because Satan would never stand for his emissaries to be cast out. And then Jesus says something really interesting:

*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. (Mark 3:27)*

Satan is the strong man. Satan has taken the whole world captive. He is ...

*... the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, (Ephesians 2:2)*

This world is his house and he has it well-fortified. But Jesus has the power to bind Satan. And Jesus is in the business of liberating people from their bondage to sin, their bondage to Satan. Jesus is ripping off the devil! He did it in the First Century, and He's still doing it today. The devil doesn't like it, but there is nothing he can do about it. He's tied up; he's bound.

But now, as for you scribes who simply refuse to believe the truth:

*"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"—(Mark 3:28-29)*

Folks call this the unpardonable sin and I've talked to a lot of folks who are terrified that they have committed this unpardonable sin: blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. But what exactly is it? How do you know if you have committed it?

First of all, let me assure you, if you are worried that you might have committed the unpardonable sin, then you haven't. You see, the Holy Spirit's job is to reveal and teach the Gospel of Christ. He convicts us of sin, righteousness and the judgment to come. He explains the Word of God to us in a way that opens our minds so we can understand. He generally uses secondary means to accomplish this, the witness of a friend, for example, but it is the Holy Spirit's work. That's what He does. Jesus said:

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (John 14:26)*

When the testimony of the Holy Spirit is deliberately and willfully and persistently refused, the eventual result is a hardening of one's heart. "I don't want to believe"

becomes “I can’t believe”. That is a sad position to be in because there is absolutely no remedy. Such a person will never come to saving faith. Such a person is destined for eternal condemnation.

These scribes had every advantage. They knew the scriptures. They knew of the promised Messiah. They witnessed the many signs Jesus performed in the power of the Spirit, yet they spit in the face of the Holy Ghost. That’s unforgivable.

But if you want to repent of your sins and turn to Jesus, you have not committed the unpardonable sin.

So, we’ve looked at folks who are committed to Jesus and became His disciples and we’ve looked at folks who are so hardened by their hatred of the truth that they will never come to salvation. But there is a third category of people illustrated here: Those who are fans, but are not yet followers. Look at verse 21.

*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." (Mark 3:21)*

The phrase “His own people” refers to His own family and perhaps His closest friends. These folks didn’t hate Jesus. These are folks who loved Jesus and wanted the best for Him and as they witnessed all that was taking place, the miracles, the crowds, and the very real physical danger He was often exposed to, they became alarmed. “He must have slipped a cog,” they’re thinking. “We need to save Him from Himself.”

And there were certainly those among the crowds who were fans but not followers. Jesus knew that. In fact, he called them out on it.

*Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. (John 6:26)*

They dug the miracles! They thought it was really cool when He fed thousands of folks with just a few loaves and fishes. And man, if you were sick or crippled or deaf or blind ... look up Jesus and He can make you better. But they didn’t want Him; they wanted the stuff He could give them.

Now if you are a fan of Jesus, but you are not a follower, you are in a perilous position because Jesus will not share you with anything or anyone.

*So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:33)*

Please don’t attempt to make Jesus an accessory to your life, someone you can pull out and display when it is convenient, someone you can put back in the box when you don’t like what He’s trying to tell you. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means you have to go all in. Nothing in your life must be more important than your relationship with Jesus Christ.

*"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:26-27)*

Now understand that Jesus was using Jewish hyperbole here. He doesn’t mean that you detest and hate everything and everyone else in your life, but He does mean that He has to be preeminent. Jesus is to be more important than everything and that’s what it takes to be a true disciple.

Now, in verse 31 – 35, Mark recounts an event that at first glance seems a bit hard-hearted on Jesus part. His mother and His brothers come to get Him, but He says, essentially, they aren't my real family. This is my real family, whoever does the will of God. That's borderline cruel! But understand, His brothers didn't yet believe in Him. They would come to faith, eventually. James and Jude would write books we find in the New Testament. To me, that is the most encouraging thing about being a fan of Jesus. It's not too late! Fans can become followers. Those who are yet-to-believe can become true disciples.

Now, I would like you to take your spiritual temperature. I'm going to assume that you are not fully committed to destroying Jesus. If there is anyone here who is, I'm truly sorry but I'm not going to talk to you because there would be no point. You have already sealed your fate and I guess somebody has to go to hell.

But if you are a skeptic, ask yourself who Jesus really is. If there is any kernel of doubt at all in your mind, if you think there is the slightest possibility that there is a hell to avoid and a heaven to gain, if you think there is any chance that Jesus is who He says He is, the eternal Son of God, and that He is the only way to salvation, then you haven't committed the unpardonable sin and there is still hope. Jesus is calling you.

*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)*

As an act of your will, admit you are a sinner. (We're all sinners.)

*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)*

*And the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)*

There is a hell waiting for the unredeemed and that is what you have earned. But God loves you anyway. He loves you so much that He sent Jesus to die on the cross to pay for your sins. (Romans 5:8)

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

So just pray to Jesus and ask Him for the faith to believe. Confess: "Jesus, You are my Lord and my God. I do believe you died for me and were raised on the third day. I want to have a living relationship with you." That sort of prayer, earnestly offered, will save you because ...

*... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)*

But now, I want to address those of you who profess to be Christians. You believe Jesus died for your sins. You call Him your Lord. Ask yourself, "Am I a true disciple of Jesus, or am I just a fan?" If you are just a fan, Jesus is asking you:

*"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? (Luke 6:46)*

I challenge you to repent. Confess your sin, because He is faithful and just to forgive your sin and cleanse you of all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9) Go all in for Jesus.

*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. (James 4:8)*