



WEEK FIVE

MARK 3:7-35

LIKE HE OWNS... DEMONS AND PEOPLE?

As unclean spirits come into contact with Jesus, they too act like he owns the place. But does Jesus have this power because he's 'in' with God, or because he's 'in' with the devil? The next few incidents in Jesus' ministry force us to face the question of whether Jesus is genuinely the Son of God. In this section Mark constantly makes us ask: Who is really 'in' with who? And also: What happens to those who find themselves standing 'on the outside'?

‘With a little help from my friends’

READ MARK 3:7-19

1. Jesus is so popular he needs to preach from a boat to have any space (verses 7-9). So Jesus appoints the twelve, to do what exactly? (verse 14-15)

- How does this relate to what Jesus himself was doing?

2. What do you notice about the demons’ interactions with Jesus?

But who are his friends?

The next section is another ‘Markan sandwich’. You might notice that Mark often starts a story, but then interrupts it with another one. After, he goes back and finishes the first. This pushes us as readers to understand both stories in relation to each other. One story is the ‘meat’ and the other is the ‘bread’.

READ MARK 3:20-35

3. In the ‘bread’ story, verses 20-21 and 31-35, who’s ‘on the inside’ with Jesus?

LIKE HE OWNS THE PLACE

The word translated 'insane' or 'out of his mind' is a euphemism. Literally, it means "he stands outside" [of his mind]. If you look for them, you'll see a lot of wordplays in this chapter of Mark about where people stand with respect to others: inside or outside.

4. Where does Mark say Jesus' biological family is physically located? Why do you think Mark includes that detail? (Notice the similarity with what they say about Jesus in v21)

It seems that Jesus was willing to have his family be upset with him! He seems very aware of an even more primary identity than blood relatives. It's an identity that even the demons recognised. But some people had a very different read on who Jesus was and where his power came from. And that's the 'meat' in our 'sandwich'.

5. How do the law teachers interpret Jesus' ministry?

6. Why does Jesus say that this doesn't make sense? (verses 23-26)

7. What alternative interpretation of his ministry does Jesus offer in verse 27?

8. The law teachers have seen the work of the Holy Spirit in liberating people from demonic oppression and they've called that liberation itself evil and demonic. What does Jesus think of their words? (verses 28-29) Do you think he's being too harsh?

These law teachers from Jerusalem have seen what Jesus is doing by the power of the Holy Spirit, they've labelled it demonic, and Jesus reveals to them exactly where this means they stand with God. It's a harrowing reality, and Jesus makes sure they're aware of it.

The truth is that his ministry in casting out demons is a clear demonstration that he has overpowered the 'strong man' (Satan), and is plundering his house, rescuing people from the darkest of spiritual conditions.

If we're in with Jesus...

The 'meat' in the 'sandwich' was primarily concerned with whether Jesus was 'in' with God or with the devil. The 'bread' around the outside, however, focuses us on something that we otherwise might have missed: are we in or out with Jesus?

9. Jesus came to rescue us from living the way Satan wants us to - without God - and bring us into God's family under the authority of Jesus. How do you feel about him doing that for you? Is it something you welcome, or something you're suspicious of?

10. Sin is a powerful force, and one that remains active in our lives. But do you believe that, in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are able to conquer our sins?

- What spiritual problems do you despair that Jesus could conquer in your life?

11. How might your habits and words change over time if you started to genuinely view all people as equally 'saveable' by God, as you yourself are?

Encourage each other in Jesus' power over sin, the world and the devil! Even before Jesus broke sin's power at the cross, he was exercising his eternal authority over the spiritual realm, plundering souls from Satan's clutches. Whatever darkness of the soul you experience, Jesus is powerful, and we should not lose hope. Pray for hope, in Christ.