

COUNTER OPPOSITION
How To Study The Bible
Part 4
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A 116 paragraphs in the gospel of Mark. We're not now going to take time to give a paragraph title for all the paragraphs we're going through. But one of the things in Bible study that we've been trying to do is to suggest that at the beginning of each time of Bible study we take a moment to review where we're been and set the context. That this is a great assistance of our incorporation of the word of God into our life. We want to take that which is external to us and printed on a page and have the Holy Spirit translate it to something which is vital and living in our life.

The first four paragraphs of Mark, which begin with verse 1 and extend through verse 13 we have called Preparation. Then beginning with verse 14 through verse 45 of chapter 1 a series of seven paragraphs are Opening Events. In these paragraphs of scripture that are coming to us Mark is telling us that Jesus' ministry in Galilee consisted of three basic approaches, three front lines of advance. The calling of disciples, the healing of the sick and the casting out of demons, and thirdly, the preaching of the good news. By the time chapter 1 is over we come from Jesus being introduced and having been in total obscurity to a fame that is so deep and broad that he cannot openly enter a town but is out in the open country and people come to him from every quarter.

One has to be, just from a literary point of view, impressed with how Mark writes. That in so succinct a period of time – 11 paragraphs – he can present to us such a full picture of Jesus. Then as we open to chapter 2 we found the third section of Mark coming at us in a series of 6 paragraphs that extended all through chapter 2 and the first paragraph of chapter 3. We called this section Opposition. Opposition to Jesus began over his claim to have the authority to forgive sin. The opposition picked up over the issues of eating with sinners and tax collectors, not fasting as did the disciples of John and the Pharisees and then we got into the Sabbath controversies, the picking of the grain on the Sabbath as did his disciples. Then healing on the Sabbath day, the man with the withered hand. Jesus is articulating a principle that it is not a function of the Sabbath for man to be a slave to the day. Rather the Sabbath was meant to serve man. Therefore he did acts of good on the Sabbath and he did acts that were construed as work as well such as his disciples eating the gain from the fields.

Now we come to a part of the scripture – five paragraphs. We'll try to give a title teach one and we'll talk about what these verses mean to us.

“Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea.” See why he withdrew? Connect it with verse 6 “The Pharisees and Herodians took counsel against him how to destroy him.” If someone was trying to destroy you what would be the natural reaction? You don't stick around. You'd get out of their way. Especially if it's not the time for you to confront them. So Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea. Why the sea? The sea is a natural place to quickly get in and out. It's like being near the airport – grab a plane and get away. At the sea you can grab a boat and get away from a hostile crowd.

He's now across the Lake of Galilee. “A great multitude from Galilee followed. Also from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumaea and from beyond the Jordan and from Tyre and Sidon a great

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multitude hearing all that he did came to him. He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd lest they should crush him. For he had healed many so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. And whenever the unclean spirits beheld him they fell down before him and cried out ‘You are the Son of God,’ he strictly ordered them not to make him known.”

There is several things in this paragraph. One of the things we’ve been trying to do is shorthand the book of Mark so that we can memorize it. We’ve been trying to give a two or three word title to each paragraph. I’m suggesting that in your own personal Bible study whatever book of the Bible you study that you do the same process. Kind of the first few minutes of study, sort of reconnoiter the passage that is before you and jot down paragraph titles till you immediately begin to summarize and crystallize that teaching for your own heart.

We could call this paragraph any number of things and there is no such thing as a right or wrong paragraph title. For example there are great multitudes coming from a number of different places. There are healings that are taking place. There are demons that are being cast out. What you have in this paragraph is action that is occurring elsewhere in the gospel of Mark. One of the things you want to do in a paragraph title to make it unique and separate from all the other paragraphs is to find a word or phrase that might not be repeated elsewhere. Certainly I think there’s a verb here that does that. That it the word “crush.” The crowds are so thick around Jesus that they would have crushed him.

So I, to remember this paragraph, call it Crushing Crowds. It’s the only incident of a crushing crowd in the gospel of Mark.

Then verse 13, the second paragraph in our unit of scripture tonight. “He went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired and they came to him and he appointed 12 to be with him and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. Simon who he surnamed Peter, James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James whom he surname Boanerges. That is sons of thunder. [recognize the word “energy” there? Sons of energy.] Andrew and Phillip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas and James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus and Simon the Canaanite and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.”

That paragraph is very simple to identify. Jesus is calling the 12. So we simply say 12 appointed. That’s what he does. He takes out of the multitude of his disciples 12 whom he appoints to be apostles.

So Crushing Crowds, 12 Appointed.

Then the next paragraph begins in the middle of a verse. Verse 19b to be technical. “Then he went home and the crowd came together again so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it they went out to seize him for people were saying ‘He is beside himself.’ And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem [notice the geographical accuracy. You’ll always go *down* from Jerusalem.] said he is possessed by Beelzebub and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons. Then he called them to him and said to them in parables. How can Satan cast out Satan? If 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. But no one can enter a strong man’s house

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and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.’”

There are a lot of memorable phrases in the paragraph but one word would do it. It sort of summarizes what the whole paragraph is about.

Beelzebub. So now we’ve got a number of verses memorized. Crushing crowds, 12 Appointed, Beelzebub.

The last two paragraphs are very short.

“Truly I say to you all sins will be forgiven the sons of man if whatever blasphemies they utter. But whoever blasphemies against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin,’ for they had said he has an unclean spirit.” You could call this paragraph Blasphemy against the Spirit which is a little long or you could go for the shorter term Eternal Sin. Because I always take the easy way out I go for the shorter title. Eternal sin.

Then the last paragraph. “His mother and his brothers came and standing outside they went to him and called him. The crowd was sitting about him and said to him, ‘Your mother and your brothers are standing outside asking for you.’ He replied ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ Looking around on those who sat about him he said, ‘Here are my mother and brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.’”

Again this paragraph is rather easy to title. Words for relationships will do it. Mother/brothers. This is the mother and brothers paragraph.

So the first paragraph is Crushing Crowds. The next paragraph is 12 appointed. The third paragraph is Beelzebub. The fourth paragraph is Eternal Sin. And the last paragraph is Mother/Brothers.

How can you ever forget the third chapter of Mark once you’ve reduced it to so simple a term?

Something we want to do in Bible study always is simply observe what is there. Good observation brings good devotional insight. Where people often get in trouble doctrinally is they don’t take the time to see what the text itself is saying and jump to a lot of conclusions first.

Go back to the paragraph, Crushing crowds. It is telling us very pointedly and in Mark’s unique reporter like style that Jesus’ popularity had fanned practically beyond all expectation. Look at the areas now from which people were coming to be eyewitnesses to the ministry of Jesus. There was not only the great crowds from Galilee but they were coming from Judea and Jerusalem. This is to the south of Galilee and is a walk anywhere from 80-120 miles depending on whether you come through Samaria which most people did not or whether you came the Kings Highway, the Trans Jordan route which most of the pilgrims did. So you’ve got people walking a number of days to get to be with Jesus. Not only from Judea and Jerusalem but from Idumaea. Herod was from Idumaea. It is the word for Edom. In the New Testament it is the area to the south of Judea. So now that’s 150-200 miles walk. Not only from there but from beyond the Jordan. That is the area to the east of the Jordan River, which now is the modern country of Jordan. Then you’ve got people coming from the area of Tyre and Sidon. On the

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map today Tyre and Sidon are in the area of southern Lebanon. These are coastal towns. Biblical Phoenicia. What is important about a reference to Tyre and Sidon is here is a clear indication that already from Gentile territories people are beginning to come and see who Jesus is. If we reconstruct the New Testament world we discover that there were a number of Gentile communities on the eastern side of the Lake of Galilee. So if Jesus is beginning to move in that area it's natural that people from Tyre and Sidon are trekking over to see who this was.

The crowds become great. He is continuing his healing ministry. Jesus not only withdrew with his disciples to avoid the threat on his life but we'll see a number of times in the gospels that Jesus simply withdrew with the disciples because he wanted to spend time with them. There is an importance that Jesus attaches to interpersonal relationships. One of his most fundamental missions is to take a small hand picked group of people and transform them. He must do this by tremendous and intensive sharing of self.

By watching Jesus, I've learned something about the Christian life that I didn't see before I understood this from the gospel of Mark. That is it is so vital in Christian community that we do not confine our spiritual participation in corporate worship to simply large groups such a Sunday morning and Sunday night. We need times to be in a more intimate and personal context with other believers with express purpose of learning of the Lord, for praying together and studying the Bible together because the church of Jesus Christ was meant to also break down to this house level, this small group level. One of the ways we do that in our church is to have Sunday school classes, we do it through home group fellowships with the Friendship groups, or simply encouraging people who are involved in various outreach ministries to use that outreach as a time to have moments of prayer and the sharing of life together. Jesus does this with the 12.

He is continuing to heal, continuing to exorcise evil spirits. As before in the gospel of Mark they immediately identify him. Thus far in the gospel of Mark it's only the demons who really know who he is. At Capernaum his first sermon recorded in the gospel of Mark, first synagogue setting, the demon cries out, "I know who you are, the holy one of God." In the paragraph in chapter 1 on Sundown Healings he strictly ordered the demons not to make him known. Here again he strictly orders them not to make him known.

One of the great things about Jesus is he doesn't want the testimony of the devil. He is not interested in what they have to say even though they're the only ones who know who he is. Jesus does not have some morbid fascination with the occult. He doesn't begin to have extended conversations with demons. He doesn't build upon them, milk demonology to create some sort of aura among people. Jesus cast demons out not that they might enter other people but that they would simply go.

When we come to Mark 5 to the story of the Gadarene demoniac we're going to see where Jesus cast the demons out to. Not just to pigs. The demons themselves tell us where he was sending them and they asked him not to send them there. It would do no good to set one person free in order to bind another.

Another wonderful thing about Jesus dealing with the demons is that he did not go around and diagnose anyone as having a demon. Always in his presence the demons manifested themselves. There was something that was uncontrollable on their part when they stood in the presence of his power and majesty they couldn't set still. They knew him from eternity past. They had met him

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before his incarnation on earth. And they identified him. They could not keep still. I suggest that wherever the same power of the Lord Jesus Christ is present today no one has to guess about whether a person is possessed or not. It will manifest itself.

Jesus simply takes that and forbids demons to speak and frees people from demonic influence. We'll talk more on possession and what is involved in it when we come to the later part of Mark. Mark is simply building the case as he goes along to say one of the frequent things that Jesus did was to cast out evil spirits. Modern theologians look at this and say here's a classic case of the poor ignorant first century disciples not understanding that there are no such things as evil spirits that possess the body and here is a classic case of diagnosis misplaced. Jesus is simply dealing with mental illness and if he knew better he simply caters to the common perceptions of people and treats it as demon possession. But what he is really doing is helping mentally ill people. I have yet to know of anything that leaves a mentally ill person and enters a herd of swine and stampedes them into the sea. We're talking about something that comes out of people. Jesus orders them not to make him known. It's not the time to be made known. And even if it were he will not accept the testimony of the devil.

One of the things we're trying to do is not only title the paragraphs but say how do these connect. If you think to the section we just looked at, chapter 2 and the first paragraph of chapter 3, we dealt with Opposition. In those particular paragraphs we saw that Jesus was being acted against. There is some of that going on in this section as well. Especially the scribes and the Pharisees who were saying you have Beelzebub. But primarily the action in this section is Jesus pushing back. I would call this section Counter Opposition. He is on a positive thrust, parrying aside their charges and mounting a vast counter charge. The counter charge consists of drawing great crowds, great healings and exorcisms. Then he turns from that to call disciples which is part of his thrust into enemy territory. Then from that he zings the Pharisees with an accusation that they may have committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in calling him Beelzebub. He even forces his mother and brothers to redefine their relationship to him. So these are paragraphs in the gospel of Mark Jesus is very much on the attack so it's counter opposition.

After these great crowds Jesus goes up into the mountain. Here is where cross-referencing with other scripture can help. When we turn to Luke 6 if you compare Mark 9:35, Luke 6 and Mark 3 you get a composite of what happened in those days. The composite begins with Mark 9, Jesus looked on the crowds. Crowds had been pressing him. He looked on the crowds and he mourned that they were like sheep without a shepherd. And Matthew says "Pray ye therefore that the Lord of the harvest will send laborers into the harvest." Jesus had many followers, many disciples. He had a group of 12, a group of 70, a group of 120, a group of 150 – core committed people. How do you make the cut from the 120 or from the 70 to the 12? What was the final criteria that Jesus used to get into that elite company of 12? My guess, and it's only a guess because the scripture never tells us what the final criteria was. The scripture does tell us one, Jesus had compassion on the crowds and told his disciples to pray. Secondly, Luke tells us, Luke 6, that after he said this he went up in the hills to pray and he himself continued all night in prayer to God. When it was morning he called the disciples from whom he chose 12. The final cut consisted I think not only of Jesus' own prayer which crystallized the choice and becomes a model to us to suggest that in every juncture of life where we're facing critical choices we need to block off significant amounts of time simply for prayer. Take those serious junctures in life and set them aside for intensive prayer, following the example of the Lord because it is in those times that the Lord will minister peace to our heart and life. If we don't do that we may

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significantly miss out in what God has for us because we may not have the spiritual ears to hear what God is wanting from us in that moment.

In addition to that, Jesus has told his disciples, “Pray for the Lord to send forth laborers into the harvest. The harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few.”

It’s interesting how Jesus defined the need of the church. Those of us who are ministering in the church face all the time. There are masses of people who can be reached but they cannot be reached without workers. The size of the church of Jesus Christ is always limited to the size of the work force, limited to the size of those who will commit themselves to really care about the people Jesus is calling. Jesus identified the problem in his kingdom not as a shortage of the harvest. But shortage of workers. We strain all the time at church – we need more workers. Jesus says to the disciples, “Pray that the Lord will send forth laborers.” Don’t pray for the harvest. Pray for workers. That’s the need.

I kind of think the people who made the cut in the final 12 were the ones who went out that night while he was praying and maybe even for just a minute got down and thought seriously what the Lord was saying and began to pray about it. I don’t know if that was the final cut but I know it’s critical in the growth and expansion of the kingdom. He chose 12, Mark classically tells us that he appointed those whom he desired and they had a function, a three-fold function to be with him, to be sent out to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons. That was their initial mandate.

The call of the Christian life is first of all not to do anything. That we’ll get a chance to do. The twelve had a chance to preach and a chance to cast out demons. But before they were asked to do anything they were asked to be with him. The opportunity to be with him is the one thing we can do in life and after life. In the afterlife in heaven, we’ll no longer be preaching. Everybody’s converted. Nobody needs the good news announced. Everybody is a believer. In heaven, no demons to cast out. Even the charismatic demon chasers are not going to have any demons to cast out in heaven. It’s going to be demon free.

But the one thing we can do in heaven that we did on earth is to be with him. And it is in the Lord’s sovereign election to determine when he is going to call out our option and ask us to come out of this life into that life to be with him. But the call to be with him is the first and fundamental call upon not only their life but our life as well. Call to be with him. Then came the call to have authority and to preach.

Then we’re given the list of 12. It’s a great list. If you cross reference with other scriptures. Matthew 10, Luke 6, Acts 1 and compare those three lists with Mark 3 you’ll find some things that especially stick out. One of the things that stand out is some people are always in the same place. Peter is always number one. Phillip is always number 5. James the son of Alphaeus is always number 9 and Judas is always last. Judas Iscariot. Within the groupings the people that were in the first four – Peter, James, John and Andrew are always in the first 4 although sometimes after Peter the order of the other three may vary. Phillip is always number 5 although the people after him – Matthew, Thomas, Bartholomew their order may vary but they’re always in the second set. Then the third set, James of Alphaeus along with Simon the Canaanite also called the Zealot and Thaddaeus who is also called Judas the son of James and Judas Iscariot they’re always in the bottom three.

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By the way, if you read Luke you find the name of the next to the last apostle is Judas the son of James. If you read Matthew and Mark you find that absent and find the name Thaddaeus. Why this differential between Thaddaeus and Judas the son of James. I think it's very easy to explain. If your name were Judas and you were one of the 12 and you were not Judas Iscariot would you want to carry the name "Judas" the rest of your life? No way. I think what Judas the son of James did after Judas Iscariot was he went to using, maybe his middle name Thaddaeus and that became the name by which he was known as an apostle but those who also had a penchant for accuracy like Luke always called him by his given name – Judas the son of James.

And Bartholomew was probably the Nathanael talked about in John 1.

Why take time to note the first four, the second four, the third four? Simply to suggest that Jesus had structure and organization within the twelve. It is likely to assume that not only did he send them out as the scripture says two by two, but within the grouping he also had three groups. That makes sense because even in a group of twelve we can get lost. So within a closer group of fellowship and spiritual bondedness the disciples were asked to go to one another and to him.

So they're named and set aside.

Then this paragraph on Beelzebub. The scribes of the Pharisees come down from Jerusalem. They were the ones who asked why Jesus could forgive sin. They were the ones who challenged him to heal on the Sabbath and didn't like what he was doing. They finally came to the conclusion that with all these demons crying out he must be indeed himself possessed by the lord of the flies which is the literal meaning of the word Beelzebub. And that he is casting demons out by the prince of demons.

It's interesting how Jesus rebutted their charge. He did not rebut their charge by saying to them "I'm going to bash Satan's head in in the cross and the resurrection. I'll prove to you who I am." He did not base his argument on some future thing. He based his argument on logic. Logic that Abraham Lincoln picked up in the Civil War. A house divided against itself cannot stand. In Luke's gospel it says "If I cast out demons by the finger of God then the kingdom of God has come upon you. That you should know that what I am doing is an act that only the king himself could do. He tells us that he could not even be entering the strong man's house and plundering his goods unless he strong man has first been bound. What Jesus is saying is that already he has exercised a binding on Satan. When we look at the gospel of Mark we realize Jesus is saying, I can invade his house and plunder his goods. That is, I can cast out demons and take his property and throw it away because I have bound him.

In view of the fact that Jesus has not yet even been to the cross and has not yet risen from the dead we ask when did this binding of Satan occur. We're not told explicitly although Mark does tell us in the beginning that he was tempted by Satan. We know that the outcome of that temptation was in every respect he refused to yield to Satan's suggestions. Therefore Satan had no power over him.

I think this really is a reference that dates back to his temptations right at the beginning of his ministry Jesus had Satan tied up in knots. Notice it is Jesus who does the binding. His disciples

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are never asked to bind demons. They are told to cast them out not to tie them up. Jesus however says he has bound the strong man so that he may freely plunder his house.

Then Jesus goes on the attack. He says something which has for many people been a difficult word because we immediately take it out of context. It is so important to deal with the scriptures in context. “Truly I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of man and what ever blasphemies they utter.” In getting to the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit we often skip over those words. But aren’t those encouraging words? All sins will be forgiven you and all blasphemies you utter. Even the person who is the biggest swearer and oath taker. Even the person who has done the sin of murder of rape of incest, child abuse. These are heinous sins. As well as the sins of pride and spirituality. All these sins will be forgiven. There is in Jesus Christ a wonderful amnesty in the air. Sins you’ve committed before you became his disciple. Sins you’ve committed after you became his disciple. Sins you committed will be forgiven. Except, Jesus says, one sin. The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. What is this?

Let’s look at some of the things people have said the blasphemy of the Spirit is.

Some have said it’s cursing, using the name of the Holy Spirit as a curse word. Some have said it’s fundamentalists who have said that speaking in tongues is of the devil and they’re committing the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

What is this blasphemy against the Spirit? Mark tells us really what it is in the explanations. “Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin because they have said he has an unclean spirit.” That little phrase, verse 30, is the explanation of what the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is. “For they had said, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’” How do you ever come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? You come to believe because of the Spirit’s witness. Jesus says in John 16 “When the spirit has come he will lead you to all truth and he will convince you of sin and of righteousness and of judgment to come.” If a person refuses the witness of the Holy Spirit who is testifying as to who Jesus is there is no possibility of salvation. For it is the Spirit witnessing to us through his word and through the inner witness in our heart that is alone able to lead us to an understanding of who he is. It is the Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. If therefore that Spirit who is bearing testimony to us that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is being not listened to and is being called an unclean spirit there can be no forgiveness of sin because one is cutting off the very doorway to salvation. The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not taking the name of the Holy Spirit in an oath, it’s not accusing people who are speaking in tongues as being of the devil. It is saying that Jesus is not of God and the Spirit is the one that bears testimony that he is of God. The Pharisees who were theologically educated and sophisticated people should have known better than to have ascribed his power to the devil. They should have known as people familiar with the word of God that only one could do deeds and teach words such as this if the Spirit of God rested upon him. Jesus began his ministry by saying, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. It is that Spirit who is now being resisted.

If I as a non church goer, a Bible reader, if I really know nothing about God if I use the name of God in an oath I am at a different level of responsibility than if I as George Wood, pastor, someone who tries to know the word of God. If I let go with an oath that uses the name of Jesus Christ I am at a far deeper level of responsibility because I know what I’m doing and God will hold me responsible at a different level than the one who knows nothing about the Lord in the

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judgement for taking his name in vain. That is exactly what Jesus is telling the Pharisees. You should know what you are doing. You're the people who know the Bible. You should know the Messiah when he comes. When you refuse the testimony of the Spirit and you call that Spirit who bears witness of me and unclean spirit, you have cut off the doorway of salvation and you're on the line of having committed an eternal sin. I think at this point the Pharisees had not committed that sin because we read in the book of Acts that many Pharisees came to believe in Jesus Christ after the resurrection.

But I think Jesus is warning them. I think when it comes right down to it there is only one sin that is ultimately the indictable sin that sends a person to hell. That is refusing to obey or listen to the Holy Spirit's testimony that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. When that is not done, when Jesus is not proclaimed as Lord in our life there is no salvation. When there is no salvation there can be no forgiveness of sins.

There may be people in here this evening who have had this vexation in life. I believe the Holy Spirit is here tonight to set you free and to lift your spirit. It is not the Holy Spirit telling you that you have committed the blasphemy against the Spirit. It is the devil who's trying to play havoc with your tender conscious and make you feel like you are not worthy to be a child of God. It is the Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God. If you had committed the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit the last person you'd ever want to be is inside a church building. I think when one commits this as did the Pharisees some of them probably ultimately wound up committing this sin. They were not even conscious that they had done it.

The last paragraph is Mother/Brothers. Your mother and your brothers are outside. The wonderful thing about the gospel of Mark is it kind of lays truth out to us. It does tell us earlier that Peter had a mother-in-law, which means he wasn't single. He wasn't celebrant. He had a mother-in-law. The assumption is he was married and had a wife. So in all due respect to catholic friends he was not the first single pope. Paul tells us that his wife traveled with him. Kind of hard to lay that evidence aside. Peter was a married man is one thing Mark is telling us.

It's also telling us that Mary was not a perpetual virgin. Godly woman she was but Jesus had brothers and sisters. The text of the gospel never qualifies it by saying cousins or half brothers or the other children of Joseph or anything like this. Simply brothers and sisters. They're outside and their hands have got to be wringing with concern. After all Jesus had spent all those years in Nazareth, had never taught, had never done any mighty deeds. Now he's gone down to Capernaum the whole world is chasing after him and he has slipped back to Capernaum, back in this home and they come to rescue him. "We don't know what's happened to him. He is beside himself." And they're concerned because religious authorities are saying he has a demon and that they are out to kill him. So they want to rescue him. He must have gone off the deep end.

Jesus must do something here which I'm sure hurt him. But he has to reach to his own family and help them understand that they will never be saved on the basis of their physical relationship to him. They will be saved the same way everybody else is saved. On the basis of doing his will.

It must have been a hard thing for Jesus to say to his mother. "You'll never know me simply because you're my mother. You will know me and be my mother if you do my will." He has to say the same to his brothers and there are four brothers of his who are named in the New

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Testament. We know that he had more than one sister because the plural is used. He had at least two. He had a large family. There were at last 7 children in the home. He has to tell that family. Notice that Joseph is absent. It's his mother and brothers. By this time Joseph evidently has passed away and Jesus as a young man somewhere in the course of twelve and thirty knew the grief of having lost a father. He tells his mother and brothers, It's on the basis of spiritual relationship that our relationship will be formed. And "Whoever does my will, will be my mother and my brother and my sister." What he is telling us in the kingdom that he is creating is that we will be family to him and he will be family to us.

Lord, your Holy Spirit has drawn us here this evening. There can be no explanation for the continued existence of the church twenty centuries after your life was completed on earth. There can be no rational for the existence of the church except that the Holy Spirit has kept your words and your personal alive. The Holy Spirit has born testimony to you through your word and through that inner witness that you are the Christ, the Son of God. We're here this evening as a community and as an individual person who makes a confession of faith in you. Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. If truly we believe that in our heart and if truly we have confessed it from our lips then indeed we have not committed the blasphemy against the Spirit. For those in this audience who feel like they have and yet in their heart willingly acknowledge you as the Lord and believe that you have risen from the dead and that you are who you say you are. Lord, we thank you that tonight your Holy Spirit will move in in great assurance in their life and lift this monkey off their back which has dogged them in their Christian experience and caused them to feel so unworthy and unacceptable. Lord, we want to pray right now for a real break through in your word into our hearts. That this eternal sin is not something that is a casual kind of thing. But it is a deliberate and willful and continued rejection of you. Thereby cutting off the witness of the Spirit. Lord I just ask that not a one of us here this evening would ever want to do that in our life. But from our heart there would be an ever present confession of faith: you are the Lord. Lord, we too thank you that you have made us family, that it is on the basis of doing your will which begins with You must be born again that we be some members of your family. Then Lord so beautifully as did the disciples you call us to be with you and then you equip us to do various things because you don't call us to simply be a part of a group that takes notes and does nothing with information. But whoever you call you're in the business of transforming, to be workers in the harvest. To be people who carry the good news and do your deeds. Whether it's a supernatural deed or whether it is the nameless unremembered acts of kindness and love that you call us to. We're called in this world to do your deeds. We too have gathered around you Lord. We've come from all places and sectors of life and we identify with those crowds who walked great distances to find you, for we are there as well. We're there pressing out after you. Thankful that you're touching us, healing us calling us, making us new. Lord, we too want to pray for other people you've called alongside of our company. Maybe there were times when Simon the Zealot was not exactly appreciated by Matthew the tax collector. And Matthew came to you and said, Lord do I have to serve you alongside this political zealot? This right winger? And Simon would come to you and say, Lord, do I have to serve you alongside this leftest. The surrender peacenik guy who raised the flag of surrender to the enemy? Do I have to serve you alongside of him? Sometimes we do that with one another. Lord, I'll serve you but please get me in a different company or change the personalities of the people I'm with so at they'll be more compatible with mine. You do this splendid thing for us, Lord. You make us serve you alongside others who are different from us. Sometimes we have to grit our teeth and

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sometimes it's sandpaper to our personalities all the way. Sometimes it's very uncomfortable. But in your company there is no escape because you insist that in following you we learn also to love one another, appreciate one another and value one another and care for one another. We take a moment to pray for the people who are close to us who are as different from us as night and day. We pray that you will help us in following you, to love them and be united to them as well. We ask this Lord Jesus in your name. Amen.