

Second Sunday after Pentecost

Out of Control

Mark 3:20-35

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Analysis by Mark Marius

20and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. 21When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." 22And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." 23And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. 27But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

28Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; 29but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" – 30for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

31Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. 32A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." 33And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!

35Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Diagnosis: Right Minded without God

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Restraining Order*
Why is it that we feel a need to restrain other people? We all have this idea of how things should be, how life is supposed to flow and when someone upsets that balance we feel the need to restrain them, maybe even eliminate them. When people don't behave as we deem acceptable we have to put them in a corner, give them a time out, send them to their room, or use any other means of isolation we can. In this pericope Jesus is the object of needing restraint, by both family and scribes. (Even the crowds are restraining Jesus from getting something to eat.)

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Unclean Spirit*
When we seek to subdue people it is because we fear there is trouble with their spirit. There is something causing them to go astray and act up. If they are acting differently than us, then we have one of two things to consider: either my behavior needs changing or the opposing behavior does. Both can't be right. And of course we don't want to really examine our own behavior to determine if it is wrong. They must be wrong and therefore must be corrected. We end up trusting our own behavior and actions without even consulting God on the matter. We judge behavior without even listening to what that person may be saying. Jesus is judged as out of his mind and filled with Beelzebul.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Unpossessed*
When we judge others, we have assumed power that doesn't belong to us. Therefore we have put ourselves above God. And if God is no longer our Lord then we don't allow him to possess us either. If we are unpossessed we are available for someone else to

snatch us and lead us into eternal sin. The unpossessed by God are not part of God's family either. And it is the family of God that shares in the inheritance of eternal life.

Prognosis: Out of Our Minds with God

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Repossessed*

But the good news is that Jesus was possessed (Mark 1:10, 11). The Spirit was leading him, and God was pleased. And the Spirit didn't restrain Jesus in the least bit and so Jesus didn't restrain others. He went among all, the sick, the possessed, the sinners, the outcast to reach out to them in order to repossess them. And that repossession would eventually cost him his life on the cross. It was there that Jesus took all of our bad behavior, our judgment and gave up his Spirit for us. That could only be accomplished through death and through Christ. He descends to the depths of where Beelzebul domain and overpowers him, ties him up, and plunders hell as he rises to new life. And that resurrection gives Jesus the authority to repossess all of God's creation; we call that act forgiveness.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Clean Spirit*

Having been repossessed by Jesus' death and resurrection we are given a new spirit, a clean spirit. Through the water and the Word of Baptism, God possesses us with his Holy Spirit. Through Christ's Body and Blood in Holy Communion God assures us of that repossession as we receive God's grace and forgiveness. And this is what we trust, rather than our own actions and behavior, or that of others. And trusting our clean spirit means letting the Holy Spirit lead us where it may and unite us with other family members who may not share our flesh and blood, but together with whom we share Christ's.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Permission Granted*

So we no longer seek to restrain people but liberate them with forgiveness. With the Holy Spirit leading us, we are totally out

of our own control, as the Spirit grants us permission to boldly go anywhere on earth to spread this Good News of Jesus Christ. Which means we aren't contained by family circles but are encouraged to go out and increase God's family by proclaiming forgiveness and healing to all who will listen. And you can only find out who listens by speaking. And speaking, or proclaiming the gospel, unleashes the Holy Spirit on their lives, which will give them the permission to be out of control too.