

Second Sunday after Pentecost, Gospel Year B

United for a Better Life

Mark 3:20-25

Second Sunday after Pentecost

Analysis by Timothy Hoyer

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.



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DIAGNOSIS: We Depend on What Others Say About Us

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): I Want Your Opinion

Grounding: Jesus' fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee (1:28). After choosing to heal a man of leprosy, "Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter" (1:45).

Tracking: People's opinions are important in our lives. We want our lives to be seen so others can be impressed or so they can comfort us. The silent stadiums and arenas during the pandemic demonstrated how crowds and their cheers and boos can assign

meaning to sporting events. If no one is cheering what we do, does it have worth?

Step 2: Advance Diagnosis (Internal Problem) Our God Is Life

Grounding: The crowd was enthralled by Jesus and what he could do. Mark asserts in the first verse of his Gospel that Jesus is the Son of God. The crowd questions that though. This suspicion motivates the scribes to come all the way from Jerusalem to discredit Jesus. To them, Jesus is not the Son of God, but is “out of his mind.” He belongs to Beelzebul (the name of a Syrian god). In other words, don’t trust Jesus.

Tracking: North American society also says Jesus is not worth trusting. His cheering of us is not worth noticing. A sure way to discredit Jesus (or anyone) is to say they are crazy or out of their mind. “Sane” people know that what matters most is what we do, so we post our accomplishments on social media to get noticed and appreciated. We point to the talents and skills that get us the job. We put our faith in such things. We invest in the gods of this life.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): All Life Ends in Death

Grounding: Mark tells us that Jesus is the Son of God. Yet the scribes from Jerusalem accuse Jesus of being owned by Beelzebul—the opposite of God. The scribes condemn Jesus for doing works from God, such as healing the sick, caring for the outcast, and being merciful. The scribes do not think God shows up in his kindness. They do not want God to be so loving. They subscribe to the law of retribution. They do not realize that the law is deadly.

Tracking: Even today people have a hard time believing that God could be kind. They are used to being graded, measured,

evaluated, judged, as they obey the demands to be good. They assume that the more effort they put into life, the more life will be good or exciting or fun. They fail to see how their life will undoubtedly end in death. The law of death divides us from God.



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PROGNOSIS: We Live by the Word That Is Jesus

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Jesus' Death Ends with Better Life

Grounding: In this encounter, Jesus convinces the hearers that it makes no sense to say he uses the power of Satan to work against Satan. If a king divides his army in half and has one half attack the other half, he will lose. His kingdom will fall. But the accusations of the scribes against Jesus continue. The scribes accuse him of wrongfully claiming to be God, so they kill him on a cross. They try to divide God's house. But Jesus—who is one with the Father—rises from death, from the accusations, from judgment, to be reunited with us and give us life in his love.

Crossing: Jesus offers us a life that is new and different from what the gods of our lives offer. His life lasts—it is forever. That means our deaths are not the end. He rose from death to unite us with mercy instead of leaving us to be slaves to accusations and retribution. He gives us his love, a love that is a gift, love that loves the unlovable, so we can give his love to one another without judgment.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Our God Is Jesus

Crossing: The Spirit moves us to trust Jesus by promising us that Jesus rises for us. United with Christ, we are united with all whom Christ loves. Jesus' mercy, his promises to give us life, fill our hearts with trust in him as our God, rather than trusting in any life we might create.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): I Tell You, "Jesus Makes You Good."

Crossing: As our hearts are set free from being owned by a lesser life, Jesus becomes our motive for how to live, for how to look at what happens around us, for how to relate to other people. No longer is life about competition, it is about working together to help others. No longer is life about doing all we can for ourselves, it's about giving Jesus' care and forgiveness to others. No longer do we judge and demand justice, we offer others mercy. No longer do we judge differences of appearance

and culture, we marvel at the gifts God has created in each person. We get to be the crowd that gathers around Jesus.