

Holy Gospel according to Mark the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter...3:20-35

<sup>20</sup> and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. <sup>21</sup> When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." <sup>22</sup> And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." <sup>23</sup> And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. <sup>27</sup> But 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.

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

<sup>31</sup> Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. <sup>32</sup> A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters<sup>[a]</sup> are outside, asking for you." <sup>33</sup> And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" <sup>34</sup> And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup> Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

The Gospel of our Lord.. Praise to you O Christ.

Last Sunday was Holy Trinity Sunday – the Celebration of the Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the invitation to us to participate in the life of the Trinity...in this relationship of love and healing and life...and then we have the Gospel for today...

*Being about God's work is not always easy or recognized...Not so for Jesus... not so for the followers of Jesus either...*

How many of you have gone home,.. to your parents or grandparents place.. after being away for awhile.. perhaps you go with a sense of accomplishment what you have achieved in work or in your life...you want to share it with the folks back home...

I went home to the Bayou, after many years away, with a couple new degrees, a successful nursing career and teaching at the University...

But when I got there, then it was "oh, this is Gloria's girl, ain't she sweet – gotten so big... *as if you are not even there...or even an adult yet..* they might as well have said.. "now run along"

To them you are still the way you were in their memory – in their worldview.... and when you do something contrary to it... then it's dismissed or it is suspect...

So healing the multitudes and casting out demons would probably draw some attention...

And the Scribes had been watching Jesus and they found him quite suspect..

And his parents were concerned that he had lost his mind and was a danger to himself.. or at least drawing too much attention to himself from those who might wish to do him harm...

We are early in Mark's Gospel.. but even so Jesus has already cleansed a leper, healed a paralytic, and a man with a withered hand, cast out demons, healed many many other people, he taught and gathered quite a following. He had called the disciples and the last of his disciples named in the passage in Mark just before this one...was Judas Ischariot..

What Jesus had been doing was truly miraculous ... only the Divine could do these things...even the unclean spirits shouted out "You are the Son of God!" but Jesus told them not to make him known...

Yet, when he came home – his family thought him MAD... and the Scribes... couldn't imagine God present in Jesus – only Satan...

and as time would tell, not even Judas his disciple would see him for who he really is...with deadly consequences..

A house divided cannot stand...

Jesus uses this metaphor to try to open the minds of the Scribes so that they can envision what they were saying as wrong...

How could Satan throw out Satan [demons] without destroying Satan's self? Can't they see him for who he truly is?

I'm a fan of HGTV.. I love those fixer upper and remodeling shows.. so much that when Julian was on the road being Bishop and he'd call home and I'd share my ideas for remodeling the house [*I'm sure he imagined a crow bar in my hand*] he'd beg me to turn it off... don't do anything until he got home...

And to be fair...he was right...

The wall I wanted to plow through and open up was a load bearing wall...and if I had done that...

The whole house could have toppled down...

A house divided - destroys itself from within...Jesus was telling them...

And this awareness has been used as a divisive tactic against a strong house and country- many times and many ways in our history and up to this day by creating an environment of mistrust and fear, gaslighting to build factions one against another between the peoples or the pillars of the walls ...of the house

Pitting one group against the other... weakens the household...makes it vulnerable..

.. such was the intent of the disinformation and propaganda run up to Nazi Germany with aims to make it palatable for one group within to turn on and destroy the other.... Such was the stated aim of the Russian disinformation campaign -

We also find its roots in the history of racism in our country...

A house divided cannot stand. It falls from within. It becomes weak, vulnerable - easy to plunder.

Jesus is trying to help the Scribes see that this isn't Beelzebub or Satan at work healing and casting out demons. For why would Satan destroy Satan's self?

Instead it is the in-breaking of the kingdom..

This is God at work - bringing healing and transformation...

And this is also dangerous activity...especially for the powers to be that like it to stay the same..

Jesus' family was afraid. What was he doing? All this attention drawn to himself? All they could see was their fear for his safety.

They too could not see that this was God at work..

Even Judas who would walk beside Jesus in his earthly ministry, and work with him.. would not see him or understand the mission which he was on...or truly see Jesus for who he is..

A misunderstanding that would lead to Judas' betrayal of Jesus and Jesus' death..

How often do we just not see?

To prepare for caring for people after a disaster, many of us pastors and lay leaders have been taking courses in Emotional – Spiritual care. Why? Because when we reach out to another to offer care, we don't always see the wounds that are there from their life experiences ....and when we don't.. we miss seeing who they are and what their needs truly are and how we should provide care for them...we don't know how our words or actions might impact them.. not knowing, one can actually do harm in their attempts to help...

How much are we blind to? What do we not see?

And when have we, like the scribes, thought someone or something evil or Satan's work when in actuality it is God working to bring healing and reconciliation?

Hindsight is 20-20..

May we remember that our history tells us that Luther was thought a heretic and fled for his life and sequestered in a tower for his safety during the Reformation. Civil Rights leaders now revered were once vilified..Reverend MLK jr was arrested and jailed, assassinated... the Reverend CT Vivian, who was one of the Freedom Riders from Nashville who was celebrated this past week in Mississippi for his courage and activism for civil rights ..was too, considered a public threat, arrested jailed and imprisoned in Parchman prison...

Jesus too was arrested as an insurrectionist and executed.

What do we not see? Especially when we heap judgement on our neighbor?

What do we not see, when those in power hide actions from our sight .. as we remember this week the horror 100 years ago of the Tulsa Race Massacre where Black residents were attacked by a white American mob.

What else is known only to our siblings it traumatized that we have not seen?

Be careful of load bearing walls, my friends. And that which divides and weakens...

Let us pray for vision – to see as God sees...to see even when it is difficult...or painful, even when in seeing.. we see our failures and complicity to that which caused harm...that which is not God's doing or desire....

Let us pray for vision - to truly see and encounter one another – wounds and all - and see God present and active in this hurting world.

Let us walk humbly, trusting that God is at work healing and bringing us together in ways that are often surprising and unexpected...even when we get it wrong..

And let us have courage to stand with the One who bears the load, the One who risked it all, the One who walks in the midst of division drawing us all to himself for the healing of the world...

May we have eyes to see you, Jesus, and wisdom and courage to follow you, and bear your love to this broken world.. AMEN