



The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.
Mark 3:20-35

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English Standard Version

“The Scribes and The Siblings”

The 8th Sermon in a series on The Gospel of Mark entitled
“The King and His Cross”

Mark 3:20-35

“Then He [Jesus] went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹ And when His family heard it, they went out to seize Him, for they were saying, “He is out of His mind.”

²² And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons He casts out the demons.” ²³ And He called them to him and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

²⁸ “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — ³⁰ for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

³¹ And his mother and His brothers came, and standing outside they sent to Him and called Him. ³² And a crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” ³³ And He answered them, “Who are My mother and

My brothers?”³⁴ And looking about at those who sat around Him, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers!³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, He is My brother and sister and mother.”

Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. Thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. You have brought us to this amazing Gospel to learn more about your Son, Jesus. O Lord, many are the words of men that we’ve heard in the week now behind us. Before us now is the living and inerrant Word of Almighty God. And so we pray that You would give us Your Spirit that Your words may command our loyalty and have our attention and grip our hearts and nourish our souls and lead us to repentance and faith as we walk with our Savior. Thank You that today we’re learning once again from Mark, a follower of Jesus, as he shows us the life of Christ. Help us to hear it, understand it, believe it, and obey it. And so we pray, speak through the Gospel of Mark this morning, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us see Jesus, for in His name we pray, amen and amen.

INTRODUCTION: A Weapon with Consequences

I became a Christian as a sophomore in high school. Another guy in my grade came to Christ at the same time and we became best friends. And we remained that way up until his untimely death 18 years ago. He was one of those guys that you could go a long time without seeing, but when you finally got together, it was like you’d never been apart. His name was Mark and he was great fun. I enjoyed our time together, and I wish we’d had a lot more.

About six months after becoming Christians, Mark and I went on a week-long summer camp that our church youth group put on. We went to the old Barrington College, which has since merged with Gordon College, but at the time it was in Barrington, Rhode Island. And since Mark and I had come to Christ at about the same time, we were asked to share our testimony with the whole group, which consisted of several hundred high school students from all over the Boston area. I have no idea what I said ... and I doubt anyone else does either. But I vividly remember what Mark said. He was really attracted to the joy the other Christians had, our small group leader in particular. He loved that this guy was more excited, more joyous, sang louder, was the first to sign up for any activity, and was a great leader. And he wanted to sign up too. And there’s the rub. You see, Mark was drawn to Christianity by a guy who was a great leader. **But He Wasn’t Drawn To Christ.**

I’ve never forgotten that, because to some degree, it explained what happened the next year. The next year, as youth group geared up again, I called Mark and asked if he needed a ride to the first meeting. It was important because we lived in the suburbs and our youth group was at Park Street Church in Boston, right on the Boston Common. We would drive to the parking lot and take the Green Line into the city. The metro system in Boston is run by the MBTA (The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority), commonly known as the “T”.

And so I asked Mark if he needed a ride. And he didn’t answer. There was a long silence. Finally, I said, “Mark, you there?” And he replied, “Yeah, I’m here. Man, I don’t think I’m going. In fact, I don’t think I’m going anymore. It was fun, but ... it’s just not my thing. Have a good time.”

I was beside myself. I was stunned. I argued. I pleaded. I begged. But he wouldn’t budge. Just **not going** to do the church thing anymore. So I called our small group leader and

some of the other youth group leaders and told them Mark was dropping out. I couldn't believe it. And most of them handled it great. They met with Mark, they prayed with Mark, they loved Mark.

But **one guy** didn't handle it very well. He told Mark that by leaving the church and leaving the youth group ... he was leaving Christ. And that was the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. And he was damning himself to hell. Mark simply said, "I'm sorry." And he hung up. And except for the occasional wedding or funeral ... **he never went back to church again.**

Oh, we remained friends. I went to college and he went to the Air Force. Then he went to college and I went to the Army. We both got married and we both had kids. Eventually I went to seminary and he went to grad school. We both got Master's degrees and we both got Doctorates. He remained my best friend right up until the day he died. And I still miss him.

Occasionally late at night, usually over a beer, we'd get talking about high school, and once in a very great while, we'd talk about what happened. And Mark would talk some about faith, and what it meant to live that out. And I took hope in that. But Mark never forgot what that **one guy** said to him that fall day, so many September's ago. And he would say something to the effect of, "You know, some people think it's too late for me." And I would say, "It's never too late. Not for you. Not for anybody."

That deadly phrase, "*the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit*," is found in our text today. And it contains **a great truth**. But when misused, or even misunderstood, it becomes **a great weapon, with devastating consequences**. **So don't use it lightly!** Jesus didn't use it lightly. He used it only **once**, recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And He used it **to challenge people, not to condemn them**. And He used it when they attributed **the work of God ... to Satan**. The ESV Study Bible says this is done "through the **flagrant, willful, and persistent** rejection of God and His commands. This sin is committed **only by unbelievers** who **deliberately and unchangeably REJECT** the ministry of the Holy Spirit in calling them to salvation." This is done by people with **hardened** hearts, who **don't care** about God, who **don't care** about salvation, who **don't care** about their own eternal destiny. It's given as a **warning**, and it's given as a **challenge**, but **never ... as a weapon**.

And to understand that we have to turn to our text today, **Mark 3:20–35**. First of all, most commentators, and most preachers, divide this passage into two chapters, or two sermons, or two lessons. And I'm not persuaded that's the best way to handle the text ... primarily because this is part of the same teaching moment, where Jesus is answering both the scribes ... and the crowd. So let's turn to **Mark 3**, our text for this morning ... and the first thing we notice is that this text is about **unbelief**. We'll start with ...

v. 20-22: THE ARGUMENT OF UNBELIEF¹

1 The Exposition of the text is adapted from my sermon, "Careful Words About the Kingdom" preached here at Potomac Hills, 9/22/13. **And the sermons, "True Family"** 8/5/18 and "*Mad, Bad, or God?*" 8/29/18, both by Dr. David Strain, Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church (PCA), Jackson, MS, 7/22/18, www.fpcjackson.org; "*Liar, Lunatic, or Lord?*" by Pastor Josh Black, First Evangelical Free Church, Wichita, KS, 9/28/14, www.firstfreewichita.org; "*Jesus' Family*" by Rev. D. Marion Clark, Lake Oconee Presbyterian Church, Eatonton, GA, 10/1/00, www.lopc-pca.org; "*Binding the Strong Man*" by Dr. Kim Riddlebarger, Christ Reformed Church in Anaheim, CA, 2/19/06, www.christreformed.org; and "*The Family of Jesus*" by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, 3/5/06, *The Tim Keller Sermon Archive*, Logos Bible Software 8.8. **And the books, Preaching the Word – Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior** by Dr. R. Kent Hughes, pages 88-101; [Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary](#):

*“Then He [Jesus] went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat.”*²¹ *And when His family heard it, they went out to seize Him, for they were saying, “He is out of His mind.”*²² *And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons He casts out the demons.”*

We’ve been working our way through Mark’s Gospel for eight Sundays now, and we’re at the end of the third chapter, and we’ve come to a pair of connected passages that teach us about Jesus’ family. We’re introduced to His family in **verses 20 and 21**. They’ve heard about the commotion surrounding Jesus’ ministry in Capernaum. They’ve gotten concerned that Jesus has finally lost it and has had some sort of episode, some sort of breakdown, something like that. And so they’ve made the journey down to Capernaum from Nazareth to put a stop to all this nonsense; it’s sort of an intervention on their part. They’re there to **seize** Jesus and bring Him home. Then, a delegation arrives from Jerusalem. They’re scribes sent from Jerusalem to investigate Jesus’ ministry and to bring charges against Him. They’re going to accuse Him of great sin. So, there’s two things going on at the same time. His family is coming for Him because they think there’s something wrong with Him. They think He’s **insane**. They say, **“He is out of His mind.”** The second group doesn’t think He’s crazy, they think He’s **evil**. They accuse Him of being in league **with the Devil**. Look at **verse 22**, *“And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons He casts out the demons.”*

The scribes can’t deny that Jesus has power over sickness and power to cast out demons. They’ve seen it with their own eyes! But now they’re in a pickle because Jesus is using His power over sickness and demons to make a point. Jesus claims to be God. He claims He has the power to forgive sins. And He’s backing this claim up by healing the sick and casting out demons. They can’t deny that Christ has the power to cast out demons. But they refuse to believe He’s God. So they offer **an alternate explanation**. He’s not casting out demons because He’s God. He’s casting out demons because He **has** a demon. Not only that, He’s casting out demons because He’s possessed by the prince of demons, Beelzebul — in other words, Satan! So one group, His family, thinks He’s a **lunatic**. The other group, the scribes, think He’s a **liar**. And if that sounds familiar to you, it should.

Many of you know it from the famous quote by C.S. Lewis. It appears in two of his books, The Case for Christianity, and Mere Christianity. It’s commonly known at the **“trilemma”** and it goes as follows ... This is C.S. Lewis ... *“I’m trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really silly thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” That’s the one thing we mustn’t say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said wouldn’t be a great moral teacher. He’d either be a **lunatic** — on a level with the man who says he’s a poached egg — or else he’d be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him **Lord** and God. But don’t let us come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He hasn’t left that open to us. He didn’t intend to. Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither*

Exalting Jesus in Mark by Dr. Daniel Akin, pages 73-85; and New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Mark by Dr. William Lane, pages 137-148.

C.S. Lewis quote comes from his book, The Case for Christianity, page 45.

a **lunatic** nor a fiend, and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.” **Liar, Lunatic, or Lord** – that’s the “**trilemma**.”

Now, the problem with the “**trilemma**” is that unbelievers don’t like it. They insist on a fourth option, the very option the C.S. Lewis rules out, that Jesus was a wonderful teacher of love and peace. And even though that option has been disproved hundreds of times over hundreds of years, people still insist on it. Why? Because unbelieving people hate the “**trilemma**.” They hate the idea Jesus is either a **liar**, a **lunatic**, or the **Lord** He claimed to be, because many people today, especially the sophisticated elite of the Metro DC area, don’t want to concede that Jesus is the unique Son of God we have to build our lives around.

However, Jesus immediately challenges the critics, both then and now. Look at how He replies in **verses 23-27**. Here, Jesus is unmasking ...

v. 23-27: THE FOOLISHNESS OF UNBELIEF

The Scribes have made their arguments and now Jesus shows them how utterly **irrational** those arguments are. The accusation was that He was evil and that by means of demonic power He was doing miraculous things. And so Jesus tells some short parables, starting at **verse 23**, “*And He called them to him and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.”*

It’s not a complicated point Jesus is making. Even the scribes have to admit Jesus was casting out demons and so they needed an explanation. They’re saying that Jesus is casting out demons by means of demonic power. But Jesus says that if that’s the case, then Satan is undermining his own kingdom, and that kingdom would implode. But it wasn’t imploding, was it? In fact, it was mounting a **vigorous defense against** the ministry of Christ at every opportunity. It’s not **rational** to suggest Satan is behind the work of Christ.

Now you see what Jesus is doing? He’s doing what Frances Shaeffer called “**taking the roof off**.” You expose the inner logic of other people’s arguments and help them understand that it just doesn’t work. It’s not coherent. It doesn’t make sense of the facts. That’s what **unbelief** leads us to ... **irrationality** and **foolishness**. We’ll go to great lengths and do all sorts of mental gymnastics simply to avoid the clear conclusions to which the evidence points us. We’ll embrace as credible any argument, however implausible, if it allows us to remain in rebellion against God. We suppress the truth in **unrighteousness**; we exchange the truth of God **for a lie**. That’s what the scribes are doing here. They’ve adopted a ridiculous position. It doesn’t make sense. And yet, **unbelief** would rather embrace **foolishness** than bend the knee to Christ the King.

And before we move on, notice, however, that having unmasked the **irrationality** of their **unbelief**, Jesus doesn’t leave it there. He gives an alternate explanation for what’s really going on. Look at **verse 27**, “*No one enters a strong man’s house and plunders his goods unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.*” In Jesus’ metaphor here, Satan is the strong man, his goods are people held under his dominion and sway, his power and influence, and Jesus plunders his goods. That is, He delivers people; He sets them free from

Satanic power and bondage because **Jesus is stronger than the strong man**. It's not that Satan's kingdom is imploding because it's internally divided. That's not what's going on. No, what's going on is that Jesus is conducting **spiritual warfare**. He's in direct conflict with the kingdom of Satan and He's winning the battle. He's binding the strong man and setting the prisoner free.

He came, didn't He, to proclaim liberty, **Luke 4:18-19**, "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim **liberty to the captives** and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,*¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Jesus' words here must be understood in light of the fact that some months before He'd spent 40 days in the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil. Jesus defeated Satan at that time by not giving into temptation. And having defeated Satan in the wilderness, Jesus moved on to Capernaum, where the darkness of Satan's kingdom was pushed back all the more. He has come and, **Colossians 2:15**, "*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.*"

Jesus Christ is the only Savior of sinners before whom we all must come and bow and who can set our hearts free. He's neither **lunatic** nor **liar**. He is **Lord**, and He can give you the freedom for which your heart longs. He has come to set the captives free. Real freedom is not the path of rebellion, but the path of surrender to the **Lordship** of Christ. Jesus came to set you free. And if He sets you free, you'll be free indeed. That's why He came. He came to free you from sin and Satan. But the argument of **unbelief**, and the **irrationality** of that argument, can lead to something much worse. And so Jesus confronts ...

v. 28-30: THE DANGER OF UNBELIEF

You see there's an awful lot at stake here. Jesus has a solemn warning. Look at **verses 28 through 30**, "*Truly, I say to you, all sins will be **forgiven** the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter,*²⁹ *but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has **forgiveness**, but is guilty of an eternal sin*" —³⁰ *for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."*

Before He gets to the solemn warning, there's a marvelous promise. "*Truly, I say to you, all sins will be **forgiven** the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter.*" We should pause there for a minute and let that sink in. It's not just freedom Jesus came to bring, but **forgiveness**. In fact, the character and nature of the freedom He gives is freedom from sin's condemning power. He can make your conscience clean. "Oh Dave, you don't know what I've done. You don't know the things I've said. You don't know how I've lived." That's true. I don't. **But Jesus does**. And He says, "*All sins will be **forgiven** and whatever blasphemies we utter.*" Whatever life you've lived, there is **forgiveness** for you in Christ. Come and trust in Christ. He will set you free and make you clean. And in the context of that extraordinary promise comes the warning, **verse 29**, there's a sin that puts us beyond the possibility of pardon, "*Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has **forgiveness**, but is guilty of an eternal sin.*" A couple of things to understand about that warning.

First, Jesus doesn't say that the scribes have committed it, but He's warning them that they're close to the edge ... and yet, He's warning us too, in case we find ourselves in the same danger. Secondly, He says He doesn't mean simply saying bad things about the Holy Spirit is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. That's blasphemous to be sure, and a dreadful sin, but that's not what He means by the unforgivable sin here. Mark actually helps us understand. He gives us a clue to the real meaning of this warning in **verse 30**, "*for they were saying 'He has an evil*

spirit.” The tense there is important. “*They were saying*” – it was a **sustained pattern** with them.

You see, what Jesus means when He warns about the unforgivable sin, ***blasphemy against the Holy Spirit***, is a settled disposition of the heart where we consistently ascribe to Satan ... the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the person of ***the Lord Jesus Christ***. He’s warning us that it’s possible to become so **hardened** in our opposition to Christ, so **hostile** to the Gospel, that we come to see evil as good and good as evil. It’s possible to become so **closed** to the offer of mercy that God Himself makes to us, so **closed** to the offer of freedom and ***forgiveness*** in Jesus Christ, that we feel nothing but **animosity** toward His love held out for you in His Son. We only meet the Gospel with **disdain** and **hatred**.

Jesus is saying, in that day, we are perilously close to crossing the line into a place where our hearts are **permanently hardened**, where we no longer feel the tug and the pull of God’s grace. We’ll happily reject it and head into a lost eternity. People who’ve committed this sin go to hell uncaringly, sneering at the Gospel, hostile to Christ. The unpardonable sin is to knowingly, willingly, and persistently attribute to Satan the works of God done through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a sin of full knowledge. It is an ongoing disposition of the heart that **resists** the conviction of the Holy Spirit. It is a verbal act that attributes the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan. It is a willful **rejection** of God’s grace in Jesus. It is rooted in **unbelief**. It is a sin a Christian cannot commit. It is a sin not committed by one who is concerned that he may have committed it.

Jesus’ words here are designed to warn the scribes who were denouncing Him lest that be their fate. And they’re meant to warn us too. If you’ve been mocking Jesus, explaining Him away, minimizing His message, keeping Him at arms’ length, avoiding His claims, Jesus is warning you too ... lest your heart be hardened, and your destiny sealed beyond all hope of recovery. They’re meant to unsettle us and drive us to the only safe refuge, the only safe harbor, to the eternal security found exclusively in ***the Lord Jesus Christ***.

As you hear His warning, as the alarm sounds, He’s inviting you to come to Him for **safety**, for **freedom**, and for ***forgiveness***. Jesus is not possessed by Satan. Jesus is not dividing Satan’s house. He came to **conquer** Satan’s house. He came to **take** the captives **away** from Satan. He came to **rescue** the children of God. Jesus is able to **bind** Satan and **deliver** the children of God because ***Jesus is Lord***. He’s able, as **Hebrews 2:14b-15** says, “... *through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,* ¹⁵ *and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*”

But Mark hasn’t forgotten where this story started ... with Jesus’ family. And His family **is** a house divided. And it’s divided because they struggle with believing, and so ... to the scribes, to His family, and to the crowds, He gives ...

v. 31-35: THE ANSWER TO UNBELIEF

³¹ *And his mother and His brothers came, and standing outside they sent to Him and called Him.* ³² *And a crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.”* ³³ *And He answered them, “Who are My mother and My brothers?”* ³⁴ *And looking about at those who sat around Him, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers!”* ³⁵ *For whoever does the will of God, He is My brother and sister and mother.”*

There's another problem here and let me quickly address it by asking a question. And this question is for the moms here. How many moms are here this morning? Okay, this questions for you ... "Mom's ... have you ever wondered what it would have been like to have Jesus for a son?" At first thought, it would seem wonderful. Just think, a child – a son, no less – who doesn't misbehave. He never lies to you; he does all of his chores; he doesn't get into trouble. What more would you want? On the other hand, the glimpses that we do get make you think that having such a son wouldn't be all that easy. There's the time He disappears in Jerusalem for three days. His folks look for Him frantically. They finally find Him in the temple talking with the rabbis. Luke relays the conversation between mother and son, **Luke 2:48-49**, "*And when His parents saw Him, they were astonished. And His mother said to Him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."* ⁴⁹ *And He said to them, "Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?"* Now, that would have satisfied you mom's, wouldn't it? "Oh, yes, silly me. Well, you ready to go home?" Somehow, I don't think so.

Then there's the time Mary attends a wedding and finds Jesus there with his disciples. Apparently, she's aware of her son power, so that when the host embarrassingly runs out of wine, she refers the problem to Him. Jesus responds to His mother this way ... **John 2:4**, "*And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."* ... I'm trying to imagine what would've happened if I had **ever** answered my Mom by saying, "*Woman, what does this have to do with Me?"* Yeah ... I don't think that would have ended well for me. Now, I don't think Jesus is being rude to His mother, and they did speak somewhat differently 2,000 years ago, and He wasn't a child anymore, but had already begun His ministry ... as the Messiah ... but He makes it clear that He didn't appreciate the request. Mary, as a good mother will sometimes do, **ignores Him** ... and orders the servants to follow His instructions. But the story shows that as obedient as Jesus might be as a son, He had no qualms about exerting His authority. It may be a joy to raise a good son; but I'm guessing that it's a challenge to raise a divine one. The reason is not that He may do something wrong, but precisely because He'll **always** do the right thing. Even moms will agree that they don't always do the right thing or think the right thoughts. What will inevitably result is a ... well, let's call it a misunderstanding. And here, Jesus will use one of these "misunderstandings" to give us greater understanding.

His family is concerned about His welfare, evidently worried that His ministry is too stressful, He can't rest, and there's some truth to that. I suppose they walked from Nazareth to Capernaum, about a 25-mile trip. They finally arrive, and, just as they'd heard, Jesus is surrounded by a crowd in His home. For whatever reason, they don't go in themselves, but send someone in to let Jesus know they're waiting outside. And that's it. We won't hear from them again for the rest of the gospel. I make this point simply to remind us that Mark's interest is not always where our interest would be. We want to know what happened. Did Jesus go out to see His family? We don't know. I think He probably did because elsewhere He speaks of the importance of showing honor to one's parents, but Mark doesn't tell us. Maybe he doesn't know. His point, though, in including this story is not to give a story about Jesus' family, but to teach us about our relationship with Christ.

What's happening is that Jesus is acknowledging that whatever claims His earthly family had on Him, God has a higher claim. He wasn't prepared to abandon the work entrusted to Him

by God because of pressure from His family. He wouldn't make obedience to the fifth commandment an excuse for disobeying the first commandment. He won't make family life into such an idol that obedience to God might be set aside to pursue it. See, Jesus is going to call us to that same kind of radical obedience in the next chapter, but He won't call us to radical obedience without first engaging in it Himself. He won't call us to bear any cost that He doesn't bear first. Jesus is facing the costly implications of putting the claims of God first in His life.

Jesus is not rejecting His family. He's not being a rebellious son. He wasn't rejecting His earthly family; He was making a statement about which family takes priority. He calls us to do the will of God, **verse 35**, "*For whoever does the will of God, He is My brother and sister and mother.*" Bearing the costs of following Christ has marvelous compensations. He's saying, "When the will of God comes first, when trusting Me and following Me and obeying Me becomes your priority, then we become family. Family – you become My brothers and sisters and mother." It's not all cost. There are glorious compensations. There's great gain in following Jesus. And when you begin to follow Him, your obedience displays the marks of the family to which you've come to belong.

Tim Keller relates our text to the Parable of the Prodigal Son, "Jesus ... is the true elder brother. He willingly brings us into the Father's family at His expense. He died for us; He was plundered for us. We sit at the Father's table dressed in Jesus' clothes, with His ring on our finger. All through Him. We must celebrate and live out the fact that we are members of a kingdom family, and it is all at the expense of our elder brother, Jesus Christ. Do you live as if you are a member of God's family, accepted and loved? Remember, a child in a family obeys not in order to be loved and accepted, but because he already is loved and accepted." J.I. Packer said these amazing words, "Adoption is the highest privilege of the gospel. The traitor is forgiven, brought in for supper, and given the family name."

When Jesus showed up and said, "I'm the One who has come to bind the strong man," I don't know what these religious leaders must have been thinking, because unlike us, they knew the Old Testament. They knew the Hebrew Scriptures, and they realized the audacity of what He was saying. Jesus is the mighty One who has come, and in preaching and in healing and in casting out demons He's defeating Satan, He's showing He's **stronger** than Satan. He's **stronger** than the forces of this world. He raises people from the dead. He's **stronger** than death. He **forgives** people's sins. He's **stronger** than their evil. He touches the leper. He feeds people. He's **stronger** than the forces of evil in this world, and yet when He gets to the end of His life, the disciples see Him bound. They see Him getting plundered. They don't see Him walking to a throne. They see Him walking to a cross. This is the stunning triumph of the mighty One.

What we see on the cross is the Judge receiving judgment. What we see on the cross is the power and justice of God going into the divine sacrifice of God, receiving in Himself the punishment we deserve, paying the penalty for our sins, not going to a throne, going to a cross. There's mightiness. There's **the ultimate strength**, when the **Lord** of the universe is strong enough to be weak in order to pay the penalty for our sins so someday, He can destroy evil **without destroying us**. That's **the ultimate strength**, the strength to be weak, the strength to **forgive**, the strength to be willing to suffer and die. Because of that, Jesus Christ has forever changed what it means to defeat evil. And He did it for you.

Think about that. You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have spoken to us by Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. Thank You that You have given us a King, Your Son, our Savior. Lord, when we look at ourselves, we see not just conflict and confusion, stress and poor communication, we see sin. We know that in Jesus there was no sin, yet how grateful we are that in His family life there were still strained relationships as His brothers and mother didn't believe, didn't trust, didn't want Him to continue in His ministry. We're so grateful that when we cry out in our confusion and need, wondering what to do next – how to care for our troubled teenagers, what to do with our children, how to love and pray for an angry spouse – we have One who is able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses, who hears our cries and has been touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And as we come to Him, we pray that You would cause the family resemblance to begin to show forth from us, that we would be more like our Savior, and grant to us the great joy of finding in one another true family.

Father, forgive us for our lack of faith, forgive us for being afraid to admit our sins and blasphemies. The truth is, all of us badly need Your forgiving grace. So we thank You for Jesus, the stronger than the strong man, who sets the prisoners free, who came to wash us clean, and to forgive us. We pray for one another, for ourselves, that we would run into the only safe harbor as we hear Jesus sound the alarm and tell us of the danger of unbelief. Grant that none of us may so stray, so rebel, become so hardened in our rejection of Christ that we pass all point of recovery. Instead, today, here and now, grant that we, all of us, may come to Him seeking the forgiveness we so desperately need. Thank You for the glimpses we get of Jesus in His grace towards sinners like us. Teach us to respond with a greater trust in You, and in Your Word, and in this Gospel, to draw us ever closer to Your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

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John 1:9-12

“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”