

LifeGroups

“The Cross-Shaped Liberation”

Mark 3:20-30

UPC is doing a study of the book of Mark entitled “The Cross-Shaped Life.” The goal of this weekly discussion guide is to help you, your family, and/or your Life Group dig into the Sunday sermon and the Bible in community with one another.

This week’s main point: *So far in our study of Mark’s gospel, we’ve seen a back-and-forth pattern developing between the admiration of the crowds and the opposition of the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus was (and still is) a highly polarizing figure. In Mark 3:20-30 even his family members begin to question Jesus’ mental stability. The religious teachers accuse him of working miracles by the power of Satan. Despite this resistance, Jesus continues to preach the good news. He announces that he has come to defeat Satan, set people free, and forgive sins.*

This passage of Scripture has stirred much debate throughout the centuries. In verse 29, Jesus says there is a sin that is eternally unforgivable. We will explore what blasphemy against the Holy Spirit means and whether it’s possible for Christians to commit this sin. But don’t let that issue sidetrack you from the main point of the text. Jesus has bound the “strong man” because he is the stronger Man. As the Apostle Paul puts it, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

Share

From what has Jesus set you free?

Study

1. **Read Mark 3:20-30.**

2. *Why did Jesus' family members think Jesus had lost his mind?*

3. *Read the parallel passage in Matthew 12:22-32. What is unique to Matthew's account of Jesus' encounter with the scribes? According to Matthew, something immediately preceded the scribes' accusation that Jesus had a demon. What was that? Why did the scribes believe Jesus cast out demons by the power of Beelzebul (another name for Satan)?*

4. *How does Jesus answer the scribes' charge that he had a demon?*

5. *Author and pastor Tim Keller offers this definition of the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: "It is the scribes' action which defines this sin. They stubbornly persist in the action of calling that which is good 'evil,' to preserve their own power and authority.... It is not an isolated instance of calling good 'evil' which is considered blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, but a persistent attitude. Those who have committed this sin have consistently refused the Spirit's powerful help in recognizing the truth about Jesus." How might someone today commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Why would that person be "guilty of an eternal sin"?*

See Jesus

1. *In Matthew's parallel account, he reports that Jesus said to the scribes, "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). Consider what we've learned so far in our study of Mark's gospel. How did Jesus demonstrate the arrival of the kingdom of God in his ministry?*
2. *It's tempting to focus so hard on the "bad news" of Mark 3:29 that we overlook the "good news" in this week's passage. What is the good news that Jesus announces here? What does it mean to you personally?*
3. *What is the point of Mark 3:27? Who is the strong man and who is the plunderer?*

Send

1. *We see in this week's passage that Jesus was misunderstood if not rejected by some of those closest to him. How did he handle it? Have you experienced rejection by your family because of your faith in Jesus? How are you handling it? How might your friends help you?*
2. *Do you find it hard to forgive yourself for past sins and mistakes? What anchors for your faith do you find in Mark 3:20-30 that can help you move out of self-contempt and into freedom?*
3. *The warning of Mark 3:29 should not be sidestepped. 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith." Read Hebrews 10:26-31. Do you discern in yourself a persistent hardness of heart toward God's Word and his commands? Do you habitually sin without remorse, blaming God and*

other people for your weaknesses and excusing your wrongdoing? If so, run to Jesus and confess your need of him. Ask him to forgive you and replace your heart of stone with a heart of flesh. As Jesus says in Mark 3:28, "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man."

*Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of Him.*

Supplicate

- ◆ *Pray that we at UPC will make the greatest contribution possible to the completion of the Great Commission.*
- ◆ *Pray for Jan Holsclaw. She has been hospitalized for fluid around her lungs. Pray that pain will subside, appetite return, and all the fluid drain successfully.*
- ◆ *Pray for our church of the week: Friends Community Church*
- ◆ *Pray for our missionary of the week: Sean & Lisa Radke, Japan*
- ◆ *Pray for our unreached people group of the week: Kawa of China*