

The Third Sunday after Pentecost – June 9, 2024

Mark 3:20-35

Don't Be Deterred From Your Mission

They went into a house. A crowd gathered again so that they were not even able to eat a meal. ²¹ When his own people heard this, they went out to take control of him, because they were saying, “He is out of his mind.” ²² The experts in the law who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He drives out demons by the ruler of demons.” ²³ Jesus called them together and spoke to them in parables. “How can Satan drive 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 cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is finished. ²⁷ On the other hand, no one can enter a strong man’s house to steal his possessions unless he ties up the strong man first. Then he can plunder his house. ²⁸ Amen I tell you: Everything will be forgiven people, their sins and whatever blasphemies they may speak. ²⁹ But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.” ³⁰ Jesus said this because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

³¹ Then his mother and his brothers arrived. While they were standing outside, they sent word to Jesus, calling for him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him. They began to tell him, “Look, your mother and your brothers are outside looking for you.”

³³ He replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴ He looked at those who sat around him in a circle and he said, “Look, my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Most companies have a mission statement. A local air conditioning company has this short but to the point statement, “Your comfort is our mission.” Dutch Brothers Coffee Statement is “To Make a big difference one cup at a time.” Banner Health Systems mission statement is “Making health care easier, so life can be better.” Our congregation prints its mission statement every Sunday on the last page of the service folder. Do you have a mission statement for your life? Do you sense why God has given you life and placed you here? We will bring this up later in this sermon.

Do you suppose Jesus had a mission statement as to why He left heaven above, came to this world below, and became a true human being? Absolutely, He had a mission. He stated it in several ways. Here are His words from Matthew 20:28; “I did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many.” He came to live a perfect life in your place; He came to redeem you from your sins and to earn heaven for you. The Nicene Creed sums it up well, “For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven.” Heading to the cross to save you was his goal in life. But Satan obviously did not and does not want you to be saved. His mission statement about you is that you stray from God and end up in hell. In addition, there were people who knowingly or unknowingly sought to prevent Jesus from fulfilling his mission.

There were some awful things said about Jesus. “He is out of his mind.” And these words came from his own family. His mother Mary and his brothers were there on that day. The situation was

this. Jesus had driven a demon out of a demon possessed man. He then was in a house where he and his disciples were about to eat. A crowd so large gathered that Jesus did not eat. Rather he took the opportunity to preach and teach. I don't think, not even for a second, that His mother Mary said negative words about Jesus but she would have to correct the situation so Jesus could eat. The brothers had come also. Likely, these were half-brothers of Jesus, sons of Joseph and Mary. Matthew 1:25 says, "Joseph was not intimate with Mary until she gave birth to her firstborn son." After the resurrection of Jesus, some of the brothers came to faith and were followers of Jesus. But not yet at this time! They likely were the ones who said that Jesus was out of his mind. However, not even His family would or could deter Jesus from His mission.

Some of the people whom Jesus was teaching on that occasion were pondering, "Could this Jesus be the Son of David, the promised Messiah?" They had heard Jesus preach and teach. They had noted too that Jesus had cast out devils from demon-possessed people. However, enemies of Jesus did not want people to think that Jesus was the promised Messiah. They made a horrible and foolish accusation. "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "He drives out demons by the ruler of demons." What they were saying was that Jesus was in cahoots with Satan.

Jesus showed just how foolish and baseless and horrible their accusation was. "How can Satan drive 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 cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is finished." Then Jesus showed that the reason He could drive out demons was that He was stronger than Satan. In no way would the Pharisees' accusation deter Jesus from carrying out His mission of delivering us from sin and Satan. Satan had overcome Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden but Jesus would crush Satan's head.

Jesus solemnly warned the Pharisees. "Amen I tell you: Everything will be forgiven people, their sins and whatever blasphemies they may speak. ²⁹ But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." ³⁰ Jesus said this because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit." Wow! The unforgiveable sin!

Let's look first at some sweet words of comfort that are contained in this somber warning. All sins will be forgiven. Take the example of King David, guilty of adultery with Bathsheba, cover-up, and then had her husband murdered. Remember how the prophet Nathan led David to repentance. Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin." (2 Samuel 12:13) Or take the case of Paul who had persecuted believers. He wrote, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst." (1 Timothy 1:15) Perhaps you have committed some very terrible sins. Perhaps you treated some people very badly, were inconsiderate, were a bully. Maybe there are some sins that you just don't want to talk about. You are repentant. Those sins are forgiven. Truly forgiven by Jesus! "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin."

But there is an unforgiveable sin. It is the sin against the Holy Spirit. It is slamming the door shut to the Holy Spirit and His work. It is stubbornly and persistently and wickedly refusing to listen to God's Word through which the Holy Spirit creates faith. There are many who openly and vehemently oppose Christ and Christianity and feel that the world would be better off without

followers of Jesus. We humans are not in a position to judge whether a person has committed the unforgiveable sin. That is up to the Lord.

I am paraphrasing and quoting from a book written by a schoolmate. "Some Christians because of their own doubts and fears and struggles with temptations live in fear that they may have committed the unforgiveable sin against the Holy Spirit. But not so! Those who have committed this sin are not in the least concerned about it."

Notice again that Jesus would not be deterred from his mission of redeeming the world. Neither family or enemy or Satan would keep him from winning salvation for you.

Now let's go back to consider your mission in life. Maybe you think that your mission and purpose is simply to enjoy life and have fun or to get ahead. Maybe you think that the purpose is to possess all sorts of wonderful things –nice cars and homes. Maybe it is to have a great career. None of these things are wrong of themselves but they are not the God-given mission for you. Take a lesson from King Solomon. You can say that he had everything most people want. He was very wealthy. He was smart – he had been blessed with great knowledge and wisdom. Royalty and leaders from other nations came to seek his advice such as the Queen of Sheba. Yet he said that all this was meaningless. He had position – he was the king of a powerful nation – but even about that he said, "Meaningless". He had what sometimes is called, "Wine, women, and song." He had a harem. He wrote. "I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun." He closed his writing with these words for the mission of life, "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

That's your mission –to fear, love, and trust in God. Here is another Bible passage. It is 2 Corinthians 5:15: "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." Let me recast your mission with these words, "Blessed by God to be a blessing." A three word summary is "Saved to Serve." Write it down on some fancy paper and pin it on your refrigerator. Are you fulfilling your God-given mission? Let nothing deter or distract you from this mission.

Remember however that you do have enemies that seek to keep you from carrying out your mission. There is the old DFW gang- the devil, our flesh which is our sinful nature, and the world. They are not playing games. Here are the words of the first verse of the hymn that will be sung shortly.

I walk in danger all the way;
the thought shall never leave me
that Satan, who has marked his prey,
is plotting to deceive me.
This foe with hidden snares
may seize me unawares
if e'er I fail to watch and pray;
I walk in danger all the way.

Satan is not playing games. He hates Jesus, he hates you, a follower of Jesus. And he does not want you to be in church, to praise the Lord, to serve our God, and end up in heaven,

The sinful world is not your friend. There are many who would say to you or think the words that were said of Jesus, “You are out of your mind.” Some do call Christians bigoted and idiotic. “So you believe that you saved by grace – how naive you are. You reject evolution. That is so out of touch. You reject abortion and say it is murder. How loveless! You are a Bible believer! How foolish!”

Sometimes it might be even members of your own family or friends that would lead you astray. Above all I hope that you are a blessing to your family members and that nobody could have reason to comment, “It takes a real saint to live with you.” The brothers of Jesus sought to deter Jesus. But Jesus would not be deterred and later on some of His brothers became followers. His brother James was a pillar in the early Christian Church and wrote the book of James. You are to influence straying members of your family and friends, not the other way around. Bring girlfriends and boyfriends to church. Above all do not let them deter you from serving the Lord.

Here are some thoughts and advice to assist you in carrying out your mission of serving the Lord.

- Jesus in love had you in mind as He carried out His mission of redeeming you. Now you likewise keep Jesus in your mind daily as you carry out your mission of serving Him.
- Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit. It is vital as you seek to carry out your God-given mission to hear the Word and commune often. Through these means your faith is strengthened along with your will to carry out your mission.
- Each of us is different – some of you are children in school, others are young adults, some of you work fulltime, others are stay-at-home moms, some of you are empty nesters, some of you are retired. Bloom where you are planted or transplanted. In life we are transplanted not only to different geographical areas but different stages in life. Perhaps at one time we could hike the canyon but then it happens that we have trouble hiking up the stairs. Our employment might have changed. But wherever you are and whatever stage of life you are in, carry out that mission, “Saved to Serve”.
- Pray daily. Both Luther’s morning and evening prayers ask God, “Let your holy angel be with me so that the devil have no power over me.”
- Remember too that in addition to our biological family, we have another family. It is the family of all believers – or as Jesus put it, “My brothers and sisters are those who do the will of God.” I have brothers and sisters here – in the front pew of church are usually five widows along with a wonderful couple – they are my brothers and sisters – but also there are babies and preschool children who also are my brothers and sisters.
- My mother told us children, “Not everyone is going to like you.” How especially true that is for us believers. But do what is right in God’s sight. Don’t be deterred from your mission.

Jesus was not deterred from His mission. He bids us not to be deterred from our God-given mission.

My walk is heav'nward all the way;
await, my soul, the morrow,

when you at last with joy can say
farewell to sin and sorrow.
All worldly pomp, begone!
To heav'n I now press on.
For all the world I would not stay;
my walk is heav'nward all the way.