

RTS Women's Study: The Gospel of Mark

#6: Mark 3:7-34: Ministry Acceptance and Rejection

Intro: How Much Do You Like Being Liked?

I. Ministry Acceptance: Some Will Be For You

A. Crowds Were with Jesus (3:7-12)

- The geographical locations in v.7-8 indicate that people came from all over Israel, from the far North (Tyre, Sidon), to the far South (Idumea)
- So massive were the crowds that Jesus had to teach from a boat (v.9)
- What are some of the dangers for a ministry with big crowds?

B. The Apostles Were with Jesus (3:13-19)

- Structure of the apostles
 - 12 apostles on a mountain top (!) is a fitting start to a new Exodus/Israel
 - 3 in the inner circle (Peter, James, and John)
 - What do we learn about relationships here?
- Role of the apostles (v.14-15):
 - "might be with him"
 - "send them out to preach"
 - "have authority"
- Later, the apostles would become the foundation of the church
 - Eph 2:20: "[the church] is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets"
 - Our New Testament books all can be traced back to apostles in some way
 - The apostolic office is not repeated throughout the age of the church (Acts 1:21)

II. Ministry Rejection: Some Will Be Against You

A. Spiritual Enemies: Demons Were Against Jesus (3:11-12)

- If you are doing faithful ministry, you will be opposed by spiritual forces
- "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." Eph 6:12
- How do our ministries change when we remember our true enemy?

B. Religious Enemies: Scribes Were Against Jesus (3:22-30)

- If you are doing faithful ministry, you will be opposed by religious people
 - It was the "religious" people, not the "sinners" that were most opposed to Jesus
 - Christianity is about sinners being saved by grace, religion is about being good so that you trust in your own righteousness

- The scribes accused Jesus of conspiring with the devil
 - It is effectively charging Jesus using magic/sorcery
 - Jesus refutes this by saying Satan cannot be fighting against himself
 - Jesus also claims he has “bound the strong man”—he has defeated the devil
 - Do you realize that Satan has *already* lost?
 - Satan is a raging lion, but that’s because he’s been “cast down” in defeat (Rev 12:12)
- What is the “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”?
 - Attributing the acts of Jesus to Satan, shows that a person has a very hard, dark heart. To do so is to engage in defiant, open, hostility towards God. They had effectively declared war on God.
 - Such a spiritual disposition of hostility towards God will keep someone from being forgiven because forgiveness requires contrition and repentance.
 - Is it possible you have committed “unforgiveable sin”? Not if you believe in Jesus! By trusting in Jesus, you are showing you don’t have a hardened heart at war with the things of God.

C. Family Enemies: Family Members Were Against Jesus (3:21; 31-34)

- If you are doing faithful ministry, sometimes your own family will oppose you!
 - Jesus’ family thought he was “out of his mind”
 - Most people think religion should be “in moderation”—sort of middle of the road; not an atheist, but not a zealot
 - But God calls us away from middle of the road—don’t be “lukewarm” (Rev 3:16)
- Jesus reminds us that true “family” is not determined by bloodline
 - We are to honor and respect our blood family; but they are not ultimate
 - “Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother” (v.34)
 - How would *this* definition of family change the way you live?

Discussion Groups

1. Share with the group whether you struggle with wanting acceptance/approval from others. How does this passage help you realize that “big crowds” are not the goal?
2. Why do you think “religious” people are often the ones most hostile to Christianity? Have you experienced this in your own life?
3. Have you ever had family members who thought you were “crazy” for following Jesus? How does this passage help you recalibrate the role of physical family vs. spiritual family?