

**Indiana-Kentucky Synod
Sermon and Prayers
2nd Sunday after Pentecost
June 6, 2021**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark the 3rd chapter
Glory to you, O Lord.

Mark 3:20-35

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

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

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

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You may notice that our Gospel reading today begins in the midst of Mark’s narrative. In these first three chapters of Mark’s gospel, Jesus has been baptized, has called his first disciples, has healed many - both physically and spiritually, has eaten with sinners, did some teaching around Galilee, challenged the Pharisees, designated and empowered the twelve apostles, and now Jesus has returned home.

And all of this landed him hungry and in trouble. The trouble begins with the crowd, who would not leave him alone. “They could not even eat,” Mark tells us. The trouble continues with his family, “who went out to restrain him, for people were saying, ‘He has gone out of his mind.’”

The trouble deepens with the scribes who came down from Jerusalem to accuse him of conspiring with Satan. In their religious blindness the scribes could not see that Jesus’ work was of God. The scribes began with the assumption that what Jesus was doing was evil rather than good. They could have assumed it was good until proven evil, but they didn’t and that was their

blindness. Their assumption led them to credit to Satan what belonged to God. Is this what Jesus is referring to when he warns them about “blaspheming against the Holy Spirit?”

As I read this passage, my attention was drawn to how Jesus characterizes family. Did you notice?

We first hear that Jesus’ family tried to restrain him because they thought he was out of his mind or in other words, crazy. As Jesus continues to confront the scribes and teach the crowds, “his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him.” Obviously, Jesus did not pay attention to them. And so, the crowd who was sitting around him said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.”

And Jesus replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

As I work with congregations, I often hear people call their congregation their family. We are like a family, we care for one another, encourage one another, eat meals together and celebrate occasions together, we work together and play together, we worship together, pray for one another, love one another. We are a church family.

Did you notice, how Jesus characterizes family? “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.” Whoever does the will of God is my family.

Doing God’s will, this is the work of the family of God. I wonder how often this is the first priority of a faith community. How often do we come together as family, as a congregation, as a church to seek and discern the will of God? How often do we set aside time to listen to one another, to reflect on what we have done and what we have learned, and to discern God’s will. Where is God leading us in the future? Who is God calling us to be and what is God calling us to do?

I was in a webinar a few weeks ago and a quote was shared from Patrick Keifert. He said something like this, “A pandemic would be a horrible thing to waste.” These past 14 months or so have been a challenging time for the world, for each of us personally, and certainly a challenging time to be the church. It would be a shame, if we rushed back to the past too quickly, not taking the time to listen, reflect, learn, and move forward instead of going back.

Members of the body of Christ, it would serve us well to take some time to live out the characterization of the family that Jesus describes --- whoever does the will of God is my family.

What is the will of God? We maybe could agree on a few things. We might think of God’s will communicated by Jesus in the two great commandments -- Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbors as yourselves. We might think of God’s will demonstrated in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. How God gives to all humanity, wills to all humanity, to each one of you, God’s love, grace, mercy, forgiveness and eternal life. How God’s presence, protective, peace, providence, and power touch and shape our lives.

What is the will of God for your life as a disciple of Jesus? What is God's will as you live your faith in daily life through work, vocation, relationships, situations, and all that life brings? What is the will of God for your faith community, the body of Christ, the family of God?

It is good, siblings in Christ, to take some intentional time and space to listen, listen to our hearts, listen to one another – don't just hear, but deeply listen, listen to God's Spirit. Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know. Be still. Be. What do you hear?

It is good, siblings in Christ, to think about what we have learned about ourselves, about our congregations. What have we done new? What new patterns have formed? What have we continued? What have we stopped doing? What have we experimented with? And how does all this inform our future?

It is good, siblings in Christ, to realize that we can never, in any season of life, return to the past. Moving forward into the future, what is God calling us to do and calling us to be? What is God's will? What do we do next to step into God's will into God's future for us? Maybe it's just one small step for now. One small step forward couched in our reflection and learning.

The good news is that we never step forward into the future alone. God goes with us. God's Spirit inspires, encourages, empowers and guides. God is the author and perfecter of all of life. Co-creators with God we step into the future with the courage and boldness to explore and embrace things we have discovered the past 14 months -- new ways to do ministry, new ways to stay connected to one another and the community, new ways to worship and do faith formation, new ways to be the body of Christ in an ever-changing world. Empowered by the Spirit we learn from the past and the present and seek God's will for the future.

Family of God, body of Christ, the Church: Who is God calling you to be? What is God calling you to do? When is God calling you to step up and speak out? How is God calling you to serve? Where is God calling you to reach out? What is God's will for your congregation? Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Let us come before the triune God in prayer.

God of wholeness, we pray for believers all over the globe. Unify us in service of the gospel, that we may work together as beloved siblings to share your love with all. Lord in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of the cosmos, we pray for creation; the garden, waterways, and creatures near to us and diverse forms of life that remain unseen. Teach us to treat the natural world with reverence, seeking restoration when human divisions have caused harm to your beloved creation. Lord in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of all people, we pray for harmony among the nations. Cast out from us unclean spirits of greed and fear, that we may work in solidarity with one another for the common good. Lord in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of abundance, we pray for those who are oppressed or in any need. Encourage those who have begun to lose heart. Strengthen and renew us with your Spirit. Lord in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of healing, accompany all who suffer in body, mind or spirit, especially those we name now, in our hearts or out loud..... Grant respite and renewal to all in need. Lord in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of the ages, in your goodness you have sent us faithful witnesses for every time and place. We give you thanks for those saints who now rest in your eternal mercy. Lord in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your abiding grace.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hear us now, Father, as we pray the words that Christ has taught us,
Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

The blessing of God,
who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us,
+ be upon you now and forever.
Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. You are the body of Christ.
Thanks be to God.