

Jason Upchurch - Mark 3:1-12 - The Good News of Joy in Jesus

Big picture this morning: It is often religious people who hate Jesus the most. That was true in Jesus's day, it's also true now.

These 2 sections seem to be unrelated to each other but I think they are actually beautifully related to each other in ways that we miss at first glance.

Let me set it up this way: we can divide the world into 2 categories. There are those who are on team Jesus and those who are not.

Those who are saved, justified, adopted, Christian, regenerate, sons of God, who love the Lord with all their heart and soul.

And there are those who do not.

Matt 12:30: Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

1 John 2:19: They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would have continued with us.

There are the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares. People either love God or they do not. There are only 2 sides.

But here's the hard part: on the side that does not love God are people who claim to love God. They claim to love his word, to know him, to defend him and represent him well.

Some of these people are outright frauds and they know they are frauds. They know they don't love God. But they like power or control or money or whatever. They keep the lie going.

But the scary part is that many of them are deceived. They think they love God and are doing the will of God but they're not. Their hearts are so hard that they don't even know.

These are the people in **2 Tim. 3:13** who Paul says are evil people and imposters who go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

They are the people of **Matt. 7:21-23** who say on the day of Judgement "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works?" And he will say depart from me you workers of lawlessness. I never knew you."

They're not believers, but they think they are believers. And I think we all have concern that maybe we're in that camp. Which is why the Bible says to examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith. To make our calling and election sure.

God doesn't want us to walk around in perpetual doubt. He actually wants us to know where we're at so we can respond appropriately.

How do we make sure we're actually on team Jesus and aren't just pretending we're on team Jesus?

There are a lot of tests we could do. Are we repenting from our sin? Do we have the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, so on - growing in our lives?

The test we see here is this: how do we respond to Jesus? Do we love Jesus and rejoice in who he is and what he does? Or do we hate him and what he does?

There are a lot of people who say they love Jesus but they don't like what he has to say. They don't like how he talks to religious hypocrites. They don't like what he has to say about hell or marriage or loving our enemies predestination or resurrection. Or money or the Jews or the Gentiles.

Or maybe they say they like Jesus as a teacher but they don't believe he's God.

This is true even today. There are many pastors, many people on TV, famous people, many religious looking people who come to church week in and week out who don't actually love Jesus. They don't rejoice in who he is.

And what we have here shows that very simple contrast. The Pharisees and the religious people in the synagogue hate Jesus and want to trap him to kill him for doing good works. And they're response to Jesus could almost be seen as reasonable to an outside observer if it weren't for the contrast we see in the next section for how the masses love Jesus and will do anything to see him.

And I believe that Mark places these 2 sections together to show the stark contrast between people who think they love God and people who actually love God by a series of literary contrasts.

<u>In the first event:</u>	<u>Second Event:</u>
Jesus enters the synagogue.	Jesus withdraws to the open air
Man was there waiting	People are coming en masse
People are watching to condemn	People watching to rejoice
The crowd wants to kill him	Crown wants to crush him
Jesus has to tell the man to come	The crowd comes from all over
Rejectors are mostly Jews	Acceptors are mostly Gentile
Crowd is unified to kill	Crowd is unified to worship

Two sections, completely opposite responses to the exact same Jesus. What's our response to Jesus? How do we know if someone actually loves God? How do they react to Jesus?

So let's dive in.

1) The religious rejection of Jesus. Read 1-2

So Jesus walks into the synagogue and how Mark sets this story up is that it seems as though there is almost a looming showdown. Why is there a looming showdown? Because it's the Sabbath and there's a guy who needs healed.

To be honest, the way it seems to read is that this whole thing is a trap. A setup. See, Jesus has been to this synagogue before. **Look at 1:21-25 Read**

So he preached, he cast out a demon, people were amazed at what he did. But his reputation has been growing and growing. And specifically what he's been doing on the Sabbath is troubling to the religious leaders.

They know he healed Peter's mother on the Sabbath. But that wasn't in the synagogue. And depending on her condition - Mark says she had a fever - it may have been near fatal. Had Jesus not acted she could have died. There were exceptions on the Sabbath to working: you could give someone medical attention, you could circumcise a boy on the Sabbath, midwives could help deliver a baby on the Sabbath. But there were a lot of restrictions.

Well, we just saw last week that Jesus and his disciples were plucking heads of grain and eating them on the Sabbath. The Pharisees didn't like that. And Jesus took it a step further to say that he is Lord of the Sabbath.

So when we get to **3:1** and Jesus enters the synagogue there's a completely different feel. First of all there doesn't seem to be any teaching happening at all. There's no warm reception for Jesus here.

He walks into the synagogue and it's almost like there's this guy just waiting for Jesus. Where was he before when Jesus healed all the masses in Capernaum back in **Chap. 1**? It seem like they drummed this guy up out of nowhere to see what Jesus would do.

He walks in and there's this guy with a withered hand. What's a withered hand? Well, the word means something that is dried up. Outside of our front window at home we have a plant. About 4 weeks ago it was lush and vibrant and green and growing. Now the leaves are all withered down and they're just hanging limp. That's the idea.

This could have been a birth defect or some kind of injury he sustained. We don't know for sure. But what we do know is that his life is not in danger. That's important. There's no indication that this guy needs medical attention right now or he'll die. That was the exception that the Jews gave for the Sabbath.

He does have a medical condition but they would not have brought him to a doctor because the doctor wouldn't work on the Sabbath for a situation like this.

BTW: Orthodox Jews still keep Sabbath to this day. I was listening to an interview of Ben Shapiro and he talked about how he doesn't like reading books on Kindle because he can't use it on Sabbath. But he can read hard bound books on the Sabbath. If you get high end appliances they have a Sabbath mode which will automatically turn them off on the Sabbath. You can't watch TV - on and on. They still have crazy rules they keep.

So here they're putting Jesus to the test: will Jesus heal a man who who would probably want to be healed but doesn't have to be healed on the Sabbath?

Now, can we just step back and point out the irony here? These people who are trying to condemn Jesus know he can miraculously heal. They don't deny Jesus's supernatural ability to heal. In fact they expect him to miraculously heal. That's the whole setup.

They're not accusing him of scamming the crowds like modern day faith healers do. Benny Hinn, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, those guys are all a sham. No, they know Jesus really heals and they want him to do a miracle so they can condemn him because it turns out the healing is done on the wrong day of the week for them. That's bonkers.

Now, Jesus could have done a lot of things at this point. He could have waited until after the service when everyone had gone away. Sort of diffusing the situation. He could have waited until evening time when the Sabbath was over. I mean it's only a few more hours this guy has to endure a crippled hand - what's the harm in waiting?

And, on top that, did you notice that the man hasn't even been asked to be healed? He has no conversation with the man. He actually has no conversation with the Pharisees. Jesus walks in, see the situation, and he knows immediately what they're trying to do. He knows their hearts and their minds.

But Jesus isn't a coward. He isn't afraid of the crowd. He's not afraid of anyone. So what he does is put this man on display for the whole synagogue. Literally it says in the Greek: rise up in the middle. Jesus puts this man on display for all to see.

He isn't shrinking from anyone. He isn't backing down. He wants to make it crystal clear that he has the power and authority to heal on the Sabbath and he will make sure everyone sees that he does this very thing on the Sabbath.

But before he does this he asks a question. **Read 4**

Which do you do on the Sabbath? Good or evil? Would it be a good to heal this man or an evil? It would be a good thing. No one disputes that. So is good permitted on the Sabbath? Yes it is.

As one commentator says: If Jesus were to leave the man unhealed that would be evil. It would be a lack of compassion (Strauss, Mark). So Jesus boils it down to: Do I do good or bad on the Sabbath?

Then he says something a little shocking. **Read 4**

Now remember this guy's life is not on the line. He's in no mortal danger. What Jesus is doing is pointing his finger at the Pharisees. Because what are they trying to do to Jesus? They're trying to accuse him. To trap him. In order to do what? To kill him.

Jesus is simply doing good by healing the man. They're actually attempting a plot to kill Jesus. So he's saying, "Which of us is really sinning here on the Sabbath? I want to help a man, you want to murder a man."

And what's their response? **Read 4**

They say nothing. They have no response.

By the way, Jesus has a way of doing this. He asks questions that put his accusers in impossible situations.

Look at Chap. 11:27 for a moment. This is Jesus's final week. This is right after he cleanses the Temple - turning over tables and chasing out the money-changers and people who are basically scamming the Jewish people who want to worship. And they want to know who Jesus thinks he is. **Read 27-33**

He asks about John the Baptist. Why? Well if they agree with John, and John said people should listen to Jesus, then why aren't they listening to Jesus?

But if they deny John is a prophet then the crowd will tear them apart. So they play ignorant: We don't know.

Isn't that amazing? Jesus can penetrate their hearts in like 2 sentences and absolutely expose them as frauds. They're not as smart as they think they are.

But just like in Chap 3, their problem is that they claim to represent God but at every point where a decision has to be made they cave. Jesus puts them in a "heads I win, tails you lose" dilemma and they can't get out.

Back in chapter 3, notice the reaction to this amazing work of Jesus healing this man's hand. **Read 5-6**

Praise God that this man's hand was healed! This was a miracle! Was that the reaction? No. Mark records exactly zero positive reaction to this amazing miracle.

No "thank you for healing my hand." No "man, I can actually work again." None of that.

You ever do something nice for your enemy. "I'm going to bless them even though they're terrible. I'm going to heap buckets of burning coals of kindness on their heads and they'll finally see how amazing Jesus is and life will be great!" So you go way out of your way for them and do all this stuff - and they knife you in the back again and again and again. No thanks, no appreciation, only hatred.

That every happen to you? Welcome to the club, we've got jackets.

Jesus got nothing.

How else do we know these religious leaders are hypocrites? Look who they make friends with. **Read 6**

Who are the Herodians?

Well, as their name suggests they are supporters of the Herodians dynasty. Up in Galilee they would have been supporting Herod Antipas. They were Roman supporters, the very people the Jews hated because the Jews wanted freedom from Rome.

This is how much they hate Jesus: these religious leaders are willing to make a deal with pagan Romans who they hate and who hate them in order to kill Jesus, who should be the object of all our worship.

This is the craziest scenario. It'd be like if Russia and Ukraine just suddenly stopped fighting and made an agreement to go to war with China. We'd all be scratching our heads.

These 2 couldn't be more opposed to each other but they have one common enemy: Jesus. Jesus is a threat to the spiritual stability and control of the Pharisees. And Jesus is a threat to the political stability and control of the Herods.

This is the religious reaction to Jesus. To trap him, to accuse him, to disrespect him and get rid of him.

And I just want to emphasize that this happens all the time today. People who put on a religious front, who are dedicated to religious things - even Christian things, who make a show for years and maybe even serve in the church who don't actually love Jesus.

How can that be? Remember when Paul is praying with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 he says that fierce wolves will rise up from among your own selves? Fierce wolves will rise up even within the elders. People who don't love Jesus and don't love the sheep.

What is your response to Jesus when you read his Word? What is your response to Jesus when you read about his life? When he makes demands of you? When he shows mercy to others? These religious people reject him.

But here's what it should be:

2) The right response is to joyfully follow Jesus anywhere. **Read 7-8**

So Jesus leaves the synagogue - supposedly the place of worship. And the crowds are coming to him en masse. And they're coming from all over.

From the coast - Tyre and Sidon are coastal cities. Idumea is even further south than Judea. Beyond the Jordan would be the east side of the Jordan.

Interestingly, the area that Mark mentions are usually viewed as being outside of the land of Israel. These are Gentile lands.

Tyre and Sidon are often associated with paganism and, frankly, judgement. Tyre and Sidon were often the arch enemies of God so much so that in Eze. 28 there is a prophecy against the king of Tyre that many people think also refers to the fall of Satan. That's how bad Tyre was. And throughout the ages God promised judgement against Tyre. Here the Sidonians and those from Tyre are flocking to Jesus in great crowds.

Idumea in the south was the old remnant of the nation of Edom. Edom, if you remember, was the national offspring of Esau, Jacob's brother. Esau gave up his birthright and the nation of Edom was a cursed nation, people who God would judge and they often antagonized Israel. Here they are coming 80-90 miles on foot in crowds to see the Jewish savior.

People from beyond the Jordan were often the enemies of the Jews. Depending on the location these were the ancient enemies of the people of God on the east side of the country. And now they're coming to Israel's Messiah.

They don't need formal training in the Law to understand Jesus should be worshipped. They don't need big brains to get that he can heal and teach and offer forgiveness.

The crowds are so great, and the desire to see Jesus so strong, that he's got to get into a boat - have a floating platform because the crowd is pressing in to crush him.

Even that is ironic. The Pharisees want to crush Jesus. But for a very different reason than the crowds. And he heals them all.

And like we've seen before - the demons are screaming out randomly that he is the Son of God. Think about that: even the demons can't help but acknowledge who Jesus is. The Pharisees can't even do that. The Pharisees are more demonic than the demons. Jesus has to stop the mouths of the demons. He doesn't want them to let it out. They are functionally more honest than the religious leaders.

Let me ask you: do you rejoice in Jesus? Do you desire him more and more? Or do you want less of him? Less of what he's done, less of what he's said, less of who he is?

The right response is to see Jesus, behold him in all his glory and follow him wherever he goes.

Pray