

Mark 3:20-35

Pentecost 3; June 13, 2021

Followers of Jesus – Gather around God’s Word

For many of us, we depend on our smartphones for work, school, our personal and social life. If you think that it isn’t a part of your life, then answer the following question: *“When was the last time you left home without your phone and kept on going?”* *“Or, when was the last time you went to work and you realized you forgot your phone, and it felt like you were missing something the whole day?”* The internet has become a significant part of our daily lives. So, has social media.

For example, back in 2005, when social media was still in its infancy, only about 5% of internet users in the United States were involved in social media. How many people are on social media today? 82 % of the population in the United State has some form of social media profile. In teenagers that number is even larger. Surveys show that the number of 13-17 year olds is somewhere between 90 – 97 %. Do you know what platform are used by all these people? Adults prefer use YouTube and Facebook; teens prefer SnapChat and Instagram, while Tik-Tok is reportedly the fastest growing social network among younger users. The amount of time spent on social sites is astounding. One report indicates the average teenagers spend about nine hours on social media each day; Pre-teens are on for about six hours a day.

We might look at those numbers and think: *They must be crazy! Why spend so much time on social media?* There are some good reasons to be on social media. It enables people to be connected with family and friends, even if they are on the other side of the world. It gives people quick access to information and research. It gives people a voice – a voice that sometimes needs to be heard. Yet, like anything in this world, it can get ugly. People can use it in the place of actual communication with even total strangers. The time spent on social media can lead to cyberbullying, social anxiety, and depression. Social media can be addictive. We like to see a post that we make get lots of likes. We are tempted to think that more likes means how much people like us. It can create a fear of missing out that can even affect a person’s mental health.

Now, before you think that this sermon is against social media, it isn’t. Yet, when you look at how social media affects all of us, there might be some who think: *“You’re crazy.”* Sometimes, that conclusion is drawn simply because someone may not understand social media at all.

There was a time when people looked at Jesus and thought that he must be crazy. His family thought that he was insane. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law accused him of being demon possessed. Mark writes: **“Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind. And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”** In other words, people looked at Jesus and he thought he was nuts.

He broke the Sabbath laws to give a man rest from his disability by healing him. He spoke directly to demons and cast them out. He forgave a paralytic of his sins by simply saying he is forgiven. He hung out at the outcasts of society. He chose just a bunch of ordinary guys with dirt under their finger nails. Not quite the Messiah they were expecting. By all accounts, He looked insane!

Why spend so much time with people – especially so much time with those who seem too far out there to be loved by God? When the Jewish people looked at the crowds following Jesus, they saw people that seem too

far gone to be rescued. They were too deep in filth and just too sinful to be cleaned by God. The only conclusion that all of them could draw was: **“He is out of his mind!”**

If you were a follower of Jesus, you might have thought the same thing. How is Jesus going to change the minds of his own family? How is he going to turn the minds of the religious leaders of that day from thinking he is demon possessed to being the Son of God? There was only one way that was going to happen – gathering around God’s Word. You see as you gather around the Word of God, it is easy to see that he was crazy. Look at our first lesson from today. God had given his people a command to not eat from one tree in the Garden of Eden. They couldn’t do it. God would have had every right to crush Adam and Eve and snuff them out. Yet, he doesn’t, does he? Instead, he gives them a promise: **“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”** In those words, God is saying the exact opposite that those teachers of the law were saying to Jesus. When they said: **“He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons,”** they were saying that the Devil was stronger than Jesus. They were saying that Jesus was working for the Devil. Yet, Jesus came to do the exact opposite. He came to crush the head of Satan. The Devil would be no match for the Son of God.

Only an insane God would let sinners go totally free. Only a God out of His mind would give eternal life to those who once wanted Him dead. That’s why the crowds came to listen to this *crazy man named Jesus*. He had something that this world did not have – he came to bring peace and hope to sinners. People gathered around Jesus to hear his words. That really why you come here every week. You come to listen to the words of a crazy God. You gather here to hear about a Savior who washed you clean of all our sin. You gather around the Word of God to have some simple water poured over your head and have your sins washed away. You gather around the Word of God to receive his body and blood to assure you that your sins are washed away.

Why would we ever want to reject that? You see, we have a God who is crazy in love with us. Jesus loves us so much that he also says to us: **“Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”** His followers respond to this crazy love of Jesus by following the Word of God. I think, if Jesus were walking the face of this earth today, he would be on social media. He would want people to think that he is crazy with love for the people of this world. May God use all of us who gather around his word to be people who share his crazy love with others. May God grant it. Amen.