

Lectionary 10

June 10, 2018

Sermon by Pastor Cindy Bullock

The Holy Gospel according to Saint Mark. (Mark 3: 20-35)

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

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

Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.” And he 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.”

The Gospel of our Lord.

Imagine the scene. Start with a First Century house made of clay, with a mud thatch roof. Maybe one or two rooms, and a courtyard for cooking or for the animals. And in that house, perhaps in the courtyard, sits Jesus.

And there are crowds. Now, you’ve been around crowds, so don’t imagine some picturesque, holy, mythic picture of a crowd, with everybody sitting quietly, and politely waiting for Jesus. This is not a Bible storybook. These are people. Some of them are ill. Some of them are desperate. Some loud, some frightened, some curious, some less than respectful. Some of them are kids with short attention spans and a propensity for getting lost. Some of them are self-absorbed. Some of them hoping Jesus will make them whole. There is an air of energy and curiosity and hope.

Over there are the village elders. They're trying to figure out how to take advantage of having a healer in town. The economic impact of him setting up here in town could be better than the Super Bowl.

Over there are the disciples. The disciples were called about ten verses ago. They had no idea what they are doing. You know what it's like that first day on a new job? They don't know what to do. They are being completely ineffective at crowd control. "Could you please wait over there?" "Who are you, and why are you in my face?" "Sorry."

Over there are the lawyers, also known as scribes, with their heads together, trying to figure out if all this is legal. And then there's the crowd itself.

In his book, *"Manna and Mercy,"* Daniel Erlander presents a list of the people that Jesus found in his orbit. They were prostitutes, tax collectors, sinners, poor people, discarded people, blind people, debtors, outcasts, children, women, men, elderly people, sick people, Gentiles, Samaritans, Jews, the demon-possessed, Pharisees, lawyers, rich people, outsiders, and heretics.¹ It's quite a crowd. A big, unruly, diverse, unpredictable crowd.

And then mom shows up. I've preached in front of Mom. It's terrifying. You know she's thinking you're still eight. I wonder what Jesus was thinking when his family got there.

Mark writes:

"When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind.'"

I like the Contemporary English translation: "When Jesus' family heard what he was doing, they thought he was crazy, and they went to get him under control."

You know, I get it. I get it. Jesus is teaching and healing, and that's all good. But there are consequences. There is a crowd taking over the neighborhood. They're ruining the lawn. They're leaving trash all over. They're attracting some pretty sketchy characters. What will the neighbors say? We've got to live next door to them. We are becoming "that house."

You know, about a chapter ago, four guys got so desperate to see Jesus that they carved a hole in the roof of the house. Has Jesus or those worthless disciples thought about who is going to fix that hole? And who is going to feed all these people? It's not like there's fast food around the corner. People get hungry, and then they get grumpy. And I don't even want to think about the bathroom situation. This ministry to

¹ Daniel Erlander, *Manna and Mercy*, (Mercer Island, WA: The Order of Saints Martin and Teresa, 1992), p. 45

the crowd is screwing things up. It's out of control. They think he's crazy, and they want to get him under control.

And then there is this "reign of God" talk. That's crazy, too. The talk about love and including everyone has implications. It invites chaos. This talk about blind people seeing, and lame people walking, and prisoners being freed, and good news for the poor, is subversive. There are boundary issues. There are financial issues. There are legal/political issues.

Love is a great idea. But this is the real world. Love changes things. Love is dangerous. Jesus is raising people's hopes. Does he know how hard it is to change things? Do you know how much trouble he could get into? His family thinks he's crazy and wants to get him under control. And often so do we. So do we.

Michael Curry recently made a splash with preaching at the royal wedding. There's a collection of his sermons out called "Crazy Christians." And in it, he says:

"What the Church needs, what this world really needs, are some Christians who are as crazy as the Lord. Crazy enough to love like Jesus, to give like Jesus, to forgive like Jesus, to do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God – like Jesus. Crazy enough to dare to change the world from the nightmare it often is to something closer to the dream that God dreams for it. And for those of us who would follow him, those of us who would be his disciples, those of us who would live as the people of the Way? It might come as a shock, but those of us called to live are called to craziness, too."²

Jesus doesn't seem to worry too much about the status quo. He doesn't worry about living respectable lives. He doesn't worry about who might disagree. He is laser-focused on taking that beautiful, life-giving love of God, and spreading it around to anyone and everyone who was created in the image of God, which is to say to everyone and anyone.

What might happen because of that, he's not too worried about. That the crowds come doesn't worry him. That the leadership might disagree doesn't bother him. He's not worried about the hole in the ceiling or what the crowds might do to the lawn next door. It is too vital that people know that they are children of a loving God; that God's dreams for this world are coming to pass.

Jesus was dead-set on helping people experience the wholeness and life that God wants for them, regardless of whether they are rich or poor, or debtors or outcasts, or men or women, or young or old, or outsiders, or the elite.

² Michael Curry, *Crazy Christians*, (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2013) digital version.

You know that list Erlander made of the people that Jesus touched? Well, he also made a list of the verbs that surrounded Jesus, of what happened when Jesus was around. And it is this: People were invited, included, affirmed, loved, touched, liberate, held embraced, healed, cleansed, given dignity, fed, forgiven, made whole, called, reborn, given hope, received, honored, and freed.³

If that's what made Jesus crazy, we could use some crazy in our lives, in our world, in our city. We could use some people who are willing to color outside the lines; some people who are willing to love, no matter what, to keep loving, no matter what.

We are in need of some people who trust, really trust, that the Resurrection of Christ has changed everything, and that the Holy Spirit is moving in this world if we would just pay attention to what the Spirit is doing, and not all the other stuff that distracts us.

We could use some people who are willing to dream God's dreams and love God's love. We could use some people who have experienced the wholeness and connection that Jesus brings, and who want to spread it around - even if people think we're crazy.

In 1997, Steve Jobs narrated a commercial that went like this:

"Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them, because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world are the ones who do."⁴

My friends, this week, go do some crazy in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

³ Daniel Erlander, *Manna and Mercy*, (Mercer Island, WA: The Order of Saints Martin and Teresa, 1992), p. 45

⁴ Steve Jobs, quoted at quotationspage.com <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/38357.html> Accessed June 8, 2018