

# The Devil Made Him Do It!

Mark 3:20-35 June 4, 2025

Does your family have a “crazy uncle”? If you answered, “No, we don’t have one,” I hate to tell you, but that might mean it’s *you*.

Last November, a site dedicated to the exchange of ideas on college campuses published an article titled, *A Thanksgiving Guide For Crazy Uncles*. It opened with these lines:

*“This Thanksgiving you might step into the role of the “crazy uncle.” You know the one—big opinions, the loudest voice, met with apathy. But maybe their ideas aren’t dismissed because they’re wrong. They just don’t always bring enough receipts.”<sup>1</sup>*

In our text, Jesus is accused of being out of His mind. Sadly, it isn’t just His foes saying it. Even His own family come from Nazareth to *stop* Him from preaching His message and performing His ministry. The Lord Jesus is dismissed by both of these groups *not* because He has failed to bring enough receipts, but because they refuse to accept that He Who He says He is. The works and the words do not matter to them, because they’ve already decided what they *want* to think about Him.

**Mark 3:20 - <sup>20</sup> Jesus entered a house, and the crowd gathered again so that they were not even able to eat.**

It’s hard to appreciate how demanding these crowds were. At times, they pressed so intensely on Jesus that He had to get out in a boat on the water to keep from being crushed.<sup>2</sup>

Here in the house they are so busy with the needs of this crowd that they don’t have time to grab a piece of bread and shove it in their mouth! Seeing how little consideration they have for Jesus, we are reminded that - as *disciples* - we must pursue the *presence* of the Lord, not only pursue His *power* for us. Christianity is not about making demands of Jesus, but devoting ourselves to Him.

There are a few controversies in the verses ahead: Jesus’ family and the unpardonable sin. For the family issue, it will help if we notice a literary technique Mark uses in this section. He unfolds this scene in what scholars call a “chiastic structure.”<sup>3</sup> In a chiasm, Biblical authors present a sequence of ideas and then show the response to those ideas in the reverse order. Tonight we see Jesus with the crowd, the appearance of the family, finally the accusation of the scribes. Then it mirrors back with the *response* to the scribes, Jesus’ family reappears, and finally Jesus and the crowd again.

So we’ve seen the crowd and once again they are making demands of Jesus as if *they* are the masters and He is the slave. Not a good place to be. Even still, the Lord was patient and kind and poured out His compassion for them, *even when* His family shows up and tries to stop Him.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mindingthecampus.org/2024/11/26/a-thanksgiving-guide-for-crazy-uncles/>

<sup>2</sup> Mark 3:9

<sup>3</sup> Ben Witherington *The Gospel Of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*

**Mark 3:21 - <sup>21</sup> When his family heard this, they set out to restrain him, because they said, "He's out of his mind."**

Mark used a colloquial term where my version says "family."<sup>4</sup> Yours might say "His own people." It's a word that can mean family or relatives or friends. At a certain point in church history, translators and commentators started becoming uncomfortable with the idea that Jesus' family might act this way. Plus, Catholic doctrine says Mary remained a perpetual virgin. So some groups started to suggest the idea that these were friends or maybe cousins of Jesus, not His mother and brothers.

But remember the chiasm! At the end, Mark is going to specifically show Mary and brothers. So, it seems he wants us to understand this group in verse 21 as Jesus' literal, immediate family.

Now, Jesus was Mary's firstborn Son, but she did not remain a virgin forever. She is not the sinless Queen of Heaven as suggested by Roman Catholic tradition. Mark 6 says plainly that Jesus had four half-brothers and at least two sisters. There is *zero* suggestion in the Bible that they were Joseph's kids from a previous marriage. They were Mary's kids.

They've come from Nazareth, *not* to help Jesus out or to tell Him He should work a little less. They were saying that Jesus was out of His mind. That He was psychologically deranged.<sup>5</sup> According to Mark's language, they repeatedly said it.<sup>6</sup> They actually wanted to grab Him and take Him home. The word for "restrain" here is the same that will be used of the Jews *arresting* Jesus later.<sup>7</sup>

As we read the Gospels, it's hard to get a read on Mary's perspective, but Jesus' brothers certainly *did not believe* He was the Messiah until after the resurrection.<sup>8</sup>

**Mark 3:22 - <sup>22</sup> The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and, "He drives out demons by the ruler of the demons."**

Despite all the good Jesus was doing, there is a swell of opposition against Him. People are coming from Nazareth, coming from Jerusalem, to try to interrupt His ministry. The crowd won't let Him go, His family doesn't want Him to stay. They all think it's their job to take charge of Him and make Him fall in what line *they* have decided is best.

The scribes are jealous. The family is embarrassed. The crowd is selfish. Meanwhile, Christ is trying to tell them the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and how they can receive everlasting life! It's an ugly look for humanity. But there *are* disciples there and they're not blowing it in this scene.

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<sup>4</sup> William Lane *The Gospel Of Mark*

<sup>5</sup> Lane

<sup>6</sup> Marvin Vincent *Word Studies In The New Testament*

<sup>7</sup> Witherington

<sup>8</sup> John 7:5

These scribes are an official delegation from the religious leadership in Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> They're not interested in Jesus' message. They have started a sustained campaign of vilification against Him.<sup>10</sup>

Matthew and Luke explain that Jesus healed a demon possessed man who was blind and mute. That prompted the scribes to say, "Well, Him and Satan are working together." Beelzebul was the name of an old pagan god. The name can mean "Lord of the house,"<sup>11</sup> which will make Jesus' next comments very apt. The name also means "Lord of the flies,"<sup>12</sup> for all you literary fans out there.

The scribes used this name to refer to Satan.<sup>13</sup> Despite all they've seen and heard, they immediately dismiss Jesus in the most blasphemous term, giving the Devil the credit for this work.

People still dismiss Christ today. They say, "Well, there's too much suffering in the world," and just wave away the truth of God, the message of the Gospel, prophecy, testimony, all of it.

But Christians can make a similar mistake. When we say, "God wants me to be happy," and use that idea to dismiss things God is saying or doing in our lives, it may not be as blasphemous as what the scribes were doing, but it comes from the same place in the heart. It's still rejection of His authority.

**Mark 3:23-27 - <sup>23</sup> So he summoned them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is finished. <sup>27</sup> But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house.**

First thing first: Jesus *summoned* them. He called them over. Despite their blasphemy and hatred and jealousy, the Lord took the time to *try* to help them. He tries to *warn* them that they are on a path to destruction, not because He wants to gloat, but because He wants to rescue them.

These parables are straightforward. Look at how He tries to drive it home as clearly as He can. He uses different levels of example: Kingdom, then house, the individual. In the other Gospels we see He also pointed out that the Jews also had exorcists, so whose power are *they* using? He's trying to show them the truth, that *He* is the stronger man. That *He* has bound the Devil. That *He* is the Deliverer. These words and the deeds that back them up should've reminded them of Isaiah 49, which talks about captives being delivered from a mighty tyrant and that when that happens, "all humanity will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior."

But they *would not* believe it. They *willfully* chose to lie to themselves because they weren't willing to *humble* themselves.

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<sup>9</sup> R.T. France *The Gospel Of Mark*

<sup>10</sup> France

<sup>11</sup> Ray Stedman *The Servant Who Rules: Mark 1-8*

<sup>12</sup> Morna Hooker *The Gospel According To Saint Mark*

<sup>13</sup> *The NET Bible First Edition: Notes*

At first the stronger Man's conduct is somewhat shocking. Jesus likens it to a thief breaking in to rob a house. But in reality, this isn't a burglary, it's an *extraction* operation. The Savior plunders the Devil of that he wants most: *YOU!* You are the pearl of great price. And you can either be the devil's trophy or you can be the Lord's own special possession.<sup>14</sup> Choose this day who you will serve.

**Mark 3:28-30 - <sup>28</sup> "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for all sins and whatever blasphemies they utter. <sup>29</sup> But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin",— <sup>30</sup> because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."**

There *is* an unpardonable sin. It isn't suicide. It isn't one of the "seven deadly sins." So what is it? Some scholars say it is when a person attributes the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. Others say it's when a person fully and finally rejects the work of the Holy Spirit, which is to draw people to Jesus.

Others say it was *this* specific moment and how *these* scribes responded to seeing an exorcism. So, those scholars say, no one else can commit the unpardonable sin.

On the other hand, other scholars note that Jesus seemed to be genuinely *warning* these scribes, indicating they *hadn't* committed the unpardonable sin yet, but were close.

So what is it? We have a couple helpful clues. First, let's talk about blasphemy. One definition of blasphemy I find helpful is, "An expression of defiant hostility toward God."<sup>15</sup> Now, *blasphemies* will be forgiven. Jesus said so in verse 28. So what is different about what these scribes were doing?

First of all, they were the expert authorities on the Word of God. Some believe they had the entire Old Testament *memorized*. They dedicated their lives to knowing what God had said. Now, they had personally witnessed not only a miraculous outpouring of God's power, but listened to the teachings of Christ. And their response was to defiantly, *repeatedly* say "He is demon possessed."<sup>16</sup>

In trying to understand the unpardonable sin, one commentary says this, "*What Jesus is speaking of...is not an isolated act but a settled condition of the soul—the result of a long history of repeated and willful acts of sin. And if the person involved cannot be forgiven it is not so much that God refuses to forgive as it is the sinner refuses to allow him.*"<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, there is incredible good news in these verses: "People will be forgiven for all sins and whatever blasphemies they utter." Praise the Lord! Your sins are dealt with once and for all at the cross. And not just a select few individuals. The word "people" there is the "sons of men." *Anyone*. Not just the sons of Abraham. Not just the sons of one group or one time, but *all* who call on the name of the Lord will be saved and forgiven and made right with God.

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<sup>14</sup> 1 Peter 2:9

<sup>15</sup> Lane

<sup>16</sup> Lane

<sup>17</sup> Frank Gaebelein, D. A. Carson, Walter Wessel, and Walter Liefeld *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8: Matthew, Mark, Luke*

If you are carrying the weight, the guilt of some sin, you can lay it down at the feet of Jesus. You *must* lay it down so you can run the race Christ has given you with your eyes on *Him*, not on your past, not on your unworthiness, but on *Him*, so that your faith might be perfected.

**Mark 3:31-35** - <sup>31</sup> **His mother and his brothers came, and standing outside, they sent word to him and called him.** <sup>32</sup> **A crowd was sitting around him and told him, "Look, your mother, your brothers, and your sisters are outside asking for you."** <sup>33</sup> **He replied to them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"** <sup>34</sup> **Looking at those sitting in a circle around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!"** <sup>35</sup> **Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."**

It seems the family was unwilling to come into this house. After all, Jesus was ready and willing to summon the scribes to Himself. Do we think He wouldn't extend the same courtesy to His own brothers? Rather, it looks like they *refused* to go in. They were probably terribly embarrassed by the reputation Jesus made for the family, at least among religious Jews.

They're outside demanding that Jesus leave His ministry and come back to them - to follow them. Jesus is not dishonoring His family, but He's unwilling to choose them over His Father. And He took the opportunity to teach a wonderful truth to those who *did* believe in Him as *Messiah*: That God wasn't just making us slaves, but children in His house. That we can be *near* to Him and have a real relationship based on love. And to be *in* that relationship, we simply need to do the will of God.

How do we do that? Luke makes it very plain in his telling of this scene: "My mother and my brothers are those who hear and do the word of God."<sup>18</sup>

So we must know the word and *do* it. We must not dismiss it or wave it away or shape it to our own preconceived notions. Instead, we circle up around the Lord, to hear and do what He says. To recognize that we follow Him, not the other way around. That God's work is accomplished through Christ and our part is to join that work in faith and devotion and obedience.

As we close, one more reminder. Here we are, gathered together as disciples. Christ reminds us in this text that we are a *family*. Families can be tough. There's history and eccentricity and complexity. But we must endeavor to be a loving and healthy family - one that supports one another in grace and compassion and long-suffering. A family whose center is Christ Jesus, operating in the power of the Spirit as directed through the Word. With that perspective, we will see the Lord's will done in and through us and we will not only be in right relationship to our Savior, but to each other.

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<sup>18</sup> Luke 8:21