

## **“Are you Jesus’ family?” Mark 3:20-35**

**Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”**

**And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.”**

**And he called them to him and said 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 is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.**

**Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” - for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”**

**And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”**

When Jesus said that He hasn't brought peace, but sword, these weren't just words. He Himself experienced how His message divided His own family. How this message divided all people.

We can see a glimpse of this in our today's reading. As Jesus begun His ministry, preaching the Good News that God's reign has begun in our midst, at the same time grew also resistance to Him.

Where? First, among His own family. Today we read how Jesus was in the house of Peter and the crowds gathered to listen to Him, what did Jesus family do?

They came with the intention to seize Him. Why? That was obvious. Because Jesus was out of His mind. At least according to His own family. They felt they had to do something to stop this madness.

Similarly we can see that also the scribes, who had come down from Jerusalem, seeing what was going on, accused Jesus as being possessed by Belzeboul, that is, the prince of demons.

It is in a way edifying to see their reactions. They all, Jesus family, and these scribes from Jerusalem, they witnessed Jesus' miracles. What was their reaction? Wow, that's a true power of God! No!

Not at all. His family assumed that Jesus has lost His mind. The scribes assumed that Jesus is possessed by the prince of demons. This may happen with you as well. If you follow Christ, your family, or friends may consider you out of your mind.

If this happens, rejoice, indeed, rejoice, for as the world rejected the Son of God, the same way it rejects His disciples. Be grateful and rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer dishonor for Christ's name. (Act 5:41)

We can see how it is with us, humans. We really want to believe that we are rational beings. That we are guided by our reason. It is not true. It is our will, or we could say, our hearts that really are in control. Our reason simply serves our hearts.

This is how it works. If your heart is against God, against Christ, if you don't want to believe that He is who He claims to be, nothing will change it. You will use your reason to explain what happens so that it fits your position.

For Jesus family – they decided that He has lost His minds. The scribes chose to accuse Him of using Satan's power. They all witnessed what Jesus did, but they all managed to find their own reasons not to believe.

The same is true today. It is not someone's reason that doesn't allow them to trust Christ, it is their wills, their hearts that are against Christ. Then reason simply provides excuses to reject Jesus Christ.

Heart's decision to reject Christ comes first, then reason helps a person look good, smart and right in their own eyes. The truth doesn't matter. People believe only what they want to believe, even if it doesn't make much sense.

Then Jesus turned to the scribes and said exactly that. 'Guys, how can Satan cast out Satan? Where is your logic? If Satan acts against himself, then his kingdom cannot stand, then he is coming to the end. Don't you see it?'

Unbelief and rejection of Christ is always irrational. To justify their rejection of Christ people may say that 'yes, but you all are hypocrites', or 'yes, but how can you actually know that this is true'...

... or 'yes, but you can believe everywhere, you don't have to come into God's presence', etc. None of these excuses is logical. They can't be. These are simply unbelieving hearts rejecting Jesus and trying to save their face.

Then Jesus says something interesting. "But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house."

Jesus compares His preaching of the Good News and healing with plundering a strong man's house. What Jesus was saying was that He has bound the strong man, Satan, and now He is taking away what was under Satan's rule.

Let's pay more attention to these words. They reveal us a reality which we tend to neglect. That is – the reality of spiritual warfare which goes on as the Gospel of God's undeserved forgiveness is preached.

The Gospel of Christ is not simply a new information. When the truth about us, about our sin, about God's well deserved wrath and totally undeserved forgiveness is preached, a lot is going on in spiritual reality.

When you call a sin a sin, the truth is exposed, the light is shed in darkness and the evil one is bound. That's why there is such a resistance in surrounding culture – you can do whatever you want, that's fine, just don't you dare to call a sin a sin.

This resistance makes sense. The strong man doesn't want to be bound. He wants to control us. And when you declare that God forgives you, these Good News bring people back into God's presence.

When you were baptized in the name of the Triune God, when you heard Jesus saying to you, "I forgive you all your sins", when you heard the Gospel about the Father's love preached, this is what Jesus did for you - He rescued you from the captivity to the prince of darkness.

We need to remember what the preaching and sharing of God's message does. This is how the apostle Paul describes it. The Father "has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col 1:13-14)

Or, I am sending you "to open their eyes, so that people may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me". (Act 26:17-18)

This is what is going on when we faithfully proclaim the message that we are sent to proclaim. It is not about people changing their minds and deciding to become Christians. Not at all.

It is about bringing them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God. What we do as the disciples of Christ, as children of God, is an expansion of His Kingdom, plundering the strong man's house in Jesus name. Remember it.

Then Jesus says something that has a potential to scare people. He speaks about the sin against the Holy Spirit. It is rather scary sin, for it is called unforgivable sin. Eternal sin. "Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness."

It is scary. To have done something that is never forgiven is scary. What if we have done it unconsciously? What then? Usually only good and committed Christians are concerned about this sin. Those who care about their salvation.

What is this unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit? The answer is quite simple. It is speaking against the true God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Otherwise put – it is the rejection of the Triune God. For from the fullness of heart a mouth speaks.

So simple? Yes. You see, everything that Jesus did, He did in the power of the Holy Spirit. His incarnation, baptism, ministry, resurrection. All of this was done in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus came to reveal the Father. “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.”

The Holy Spirit's work is to give witness about Jesus, to lead us to Jesus. It means that at the same time the Spirit leads us to the Father. What is this sin against the Holy Spirit? When people reject the work of the Holy Spirit.

When people deny what the Spirit is teaching them. When they don't want to have the Triune God as their God, when they want to remain like gods themselves. When they harden their hearts, when they refuse to listen what God speaks to them.

This is when people sin against the Holy Spirit. Why can't God forgive this sin? Why would this sin remain forever? Very simple. Because people don't want this sin to be forgiven. You can't receive God's forgiveness if you refuse to receive it.

In Christ Jesus the Father has opened for all people doors to His eternal Kingdom. In Jesus He has prepared a way for us. Clear, enlightened, wonderful way, everyone is welcome, the Father desires everyone to walk on this way.

But if someone chooses to be separated from God, to reject His invitation, then nothing can be done. Jesus has bound the strong man. People have the option to leave the captivity to sin and death, and to come into light, into the Kingdom of eternal life.

But, so many choose to remain in darkness for their works and desires are evil. This is the sin against the Holy Spirit. To reject God's plan salvation in Jesus, the only way, the only name in which the forgiveness and eternal life are given as wonderful gifts.

This sin is unforgivable only as long as you keep rejecting God's forgiveness. If you finally accept it, it's yours. Then the Father Himself will run to meet you and to assure you of your son-ship, He Himself will give you your inheritance. As to His beloved child.

It is true that Jesus message divides. For it makes people to choose between light and darkness. But His message also unites people. And this is much more important. The Gospel of forgiveness makes us one family. One divine family. The body of Christ. His holy Church.

This is exactly what Jesus emphasized. Even if your own family may consider you out of mind, even if authorities of your time may call you bad names, if you do not reject the Holy Spirit, you are a member of this divine family.

If you don't resist when the Father tries to bring you out of darkness, and darkness out you, if you came to Jesus' light, where He Himself is present, where He speaks to you, where He comes to bless you, then He calls you His family.

He calls each of you His brother and His sister. This is who you are. This is who you are for Jesus. This is who you are for God the Father. His beloved child. These are not simply words.

The Triune God has made quite an effort to give you your new identity. Jesus gave up His life, so that only you could be a part of His family. He didn't hesitate to do it for you sake. Don't hesitate to receive what He gives.

Be a part of Jesus family. Be a brother among brothers, and a sister among sisters. Be united with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.