

# Old Boundaries, New Possibilities\*

Հին Սահմաններ, Նոր Կարելիություններ

## Mark 3:7-35

We are in the Gospel according to Mark. Last week Jesus was facing the Pharisees who were criticizing him for not keeping the Sabbath. Not only criticizing, they were planning to kill him. Jesus brought a new thinking and a new approach to the Sabbath.

**Today he will recreate one of the most sacred things in the Jewish community: the Family.**

It is important topic for me personally and many of you in my congregation where family has priority in our lives.

For Israel two things were extremely important, **family and national identity.** Jesus revolutionized and gave a new meaning to these two values. **(No wonder they crucified Him.)**

We find that the popularity of Jesus was expanding:

**“Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him.”** (Mark 3:7-8 ESV)

(Show the map)

As you see people are coming from all over, not only from Palestine, but also Phoenicians from Tyre and Sidon, also some Arabs from Jordan... They came for their needs.

What is this phenomenon? Is this the fulfillment of prophecy?

**“Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights, I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.”** (Isaiah 42:1 ESV)

-Jesus wanted the disciples to **have the boat ready for an emergency plan.**

The crowd could become restless. The crowd could jeopardize his mission. He asked the disciples to be quiet about his identity (at least not speak yet...).

## New Family

In the next scene, we see Jesus reestablishing a new family (the new Israel).

**And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup> And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and have authority to cast out demons. <sup>16</sup> He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); <sup>17</sup> James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); <sup>18</sup> Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, <sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.** (Mark 3:13-19 ESV)

We find that Jesus called and appointed twelve disciples. **This is his new family.**

-He went up to the mountain to do this important task. The mountain symbolizes closeness to God. Moses was called on the mountain. God revealed Himself on the mountain. Here we have the **new Moses**, with a **new mission**.

-I say this is not just a new family, **it is the NEW ISREAL**. Jesus chose twelve, why? The twelve tribes of Israel, the sons of Jacob were lost after the exile by the Assyrians 722BC. Restoring the nation was the job of the coming servant of God, the Messiah. N.T. Wright writes:

“This is the restoration we’ve all been waiting for. It’s happening at every level: spiritual, physical, social and –inevitably- political.”

This is BIG. Healing and signs are not to be compared with what is happening here. **Jesus is declaring a new family and a new nation which transcends blood relationships and nationalism.**

The new family of God is created.

My title is: Old boundaries are removed and NEW possibilities are introduced by Jesus.

### **-Who is this new family?**

They were ordinary people not with special extra ordinary qualifications. They did not have a special social status; they were not trained theologians. Matthew the tax collector, the hated man, Simon (Luke called him Simon the Zealot). Zealots were problem makers. They were fiery, violent nationalist who pledged to murder of foreign invaders. Who will collect people like this?

But two things are important (William Barclay):

1. They had felt a magnetic attraction to Jesus. Something happened that they left everything and followed Jesus.

2. They had the courage to be on the side of Jesus. So far Jesus was making many enemies within his culture, the Synagogue, and his own family (we will discuss that later). Those disciples were facing a dangerous crowd. They followed their rabbi, and it was costly.

**“And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach.”** (Mark 3:14)

-The word “apostle” comes from the Greek *apostello*, which means to send someone with a mission, a message. (առաքելալ, առաքելութեամբ երթալ)

-Mark indicates that disciples **might be with Jesus:**

“To be with Jesus means that they learn to be as their Lord so that they can extend his ministry of power.”<sup>1</sup>

“When Jesus calls someone to discipleship, he is calling that person to Himself, to belong to Him, to follow Him, and to learn from Him and of Him.”<sup>2</sup>

Jesus gave them two things: The message of the Good News of the Gospel and the authority over demons, the hidden dark powers. This is the beginning of the church.

**-His own did not understand him, and wanted him to Stop.**

**“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.””** (Mark 3:20-21 ESV)

Of course, his family could not understand all this. First Jesus gave up his work as a carpenter. They could not believe that he would leave that job. Then he was 33 years old and he was not married. That was not right; every Jewish man would be married by that time. Third, he collected a group of people (12) WHO REPRESENT THE NEW Israel. All this was too much. Therefore, they say: **“He is out of his mind.”**

**Illustration:** When I became a Christian, my friends thought I lost my mind. 2014 I went to Toronto to serve in the church for seven weeks; after 35 years I saw some of my classmates, in fact we had mini reunion. I invited them to church, they have never seen me preaching. Two of them came to hear the message of the gospel. They left differently. They called me and shared that how important was that message; they also said that they saw another Nerses; They don’t know that I am the same sinner Nerses, whatever change happened in me was from the Spirit of God; and whatever change happened in them was from God and not from me.

Next issue Jesus is attacked that he is possessed by evil Spirit. That Jesus was doing all these miracles in the name of Satan:

**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.”(Mark 3:22-30 ESV)**

**Possessed by Beelzebul**, the origin of this satanic name is vague, in Mark's gospel it indicates “the prince of demons.”

Jesus fights back saying that whatever they are saying is wrong. Why Satan will equip him to fight Satan? A divided kingdom will fall.

One more time we see they challenge the identity of Jesus.

Jesus is very clear. **He made it clear who he was and that his authority was not from Satan.**

But he made it clear that **God is merciful and forgives humanity when they confess their sins.**

**“all sins will be forgiven the children of man.”**

Those who come to God will be forgiven.

**But for those refuse God**, and those **who blaspheme God**, (continually refusing and rejecting God), there will be eternal sin.

This is serious and should not be taken lightly. **The name of God is to be honored.**

God gives us many chances to turn towards Him.

We all have moments where we can fall in a sin, or a situation where we leave God. **God's arms are always open for all of us.**

But we need to come. Turn to God!

The prodigal first came to himself and then came back to his father's house.

**Constant refusal of God's love and His extended hand is very dangerous.** One

who is alienating himself from God means one is putting himself in eternal damnation. Let us not harden our hearts.

### **How did this story end?**

His family came to him and Jesus described who is HIS REAL FAMILY:

**“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.”** (Mark 3:31-35 ESV)

His family stayed outside and called him. Very strange. Middle Eastern families don't do that. They will go in. But as I said, his family is having some serious problems with Jesus' action. Again Jesus describes who his new family is:

**“whoever does the WILL OF GOD.”**

This does not mean he ignored his biological family.

When he was in the family wedding and there was a need of wine, he provided.

When he was on the cross he asked from **John to take care of his mother.**

Honoring our parents is a biblical command. **Yet, Jesus is opening a new dimension in our lives.**

**We all have a new family in Christ.** PACC is my family. Every church where I serve becomes my new family. You are my family and I hope you feel the same way that this church is your family. Why? Some will say we come from similar backgrounds and ethnicities. Well, it is not enough; otherwise, we will become a cultural center. Culture and ethnicity are small factors. No it is much more than that; we all are here to obey and do God's will. That is uniting us. Old boundaries are broken and the new relationships through God's love unite us.

### **Conclusion:**

1. Jesus gathered all kinds of ordinary people and equipped them to become disciples (sent with a mission). We all are called for the same mission. Called to witness and serve.

“God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called!” Mark Batterson

2. Jesus gave new vision and authority to the “ordinary” people to do extraordinary service for God. No more a selected nation. This is the new Israel, and new 12 “tribes” with a new mission. We are part of this mission.

3. The Old boundaries, your family, your culture, your old friends, your old life should not stop you from pursuing God's mission. Respect your family, honor your father and mother, but doing God's will is priority.

4. Let us not reject God's calling for repentance and forgiveness. Blasphemy is when we hear the message of the Good News over and over and we do not open our hearts to God.

Amen.

1. David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary*, Mark P 137

2. R.C. Sproul, *He Thought Them as One Who Had Authority* Mark, P 55

### Literary Outline

A. Jesus creates the **new family** (the *new Israel*) on the Mountain (3:13-19)

B. The **family's** charge against Jesus (3:20-21)

C. **Charge** by the scribes against Jesus--His alleged relationship to **Satan** (3:22)

X. Jesus' parable to explain his relationship to Satan (3:23-27)

C'. **Charge** against the scribes--their relationship to **Satan** (3:28-30)

B'. **Family sends** for him but remains *outside* (3:31- 32)

A'. Jesus redefines the **new family** of God (3:33-35)

\*this title was from the book "Preaching the Gospel of Mark" by Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm