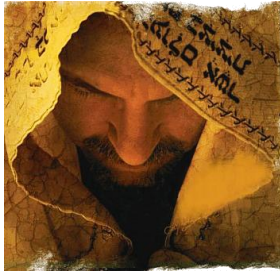


"Why Jesus Is Dangerous" (Mark 2:17, 27-28; 3:6, 29-30; 4:41)

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INTRODUCTION: Jesus is dangerous.

He is so dangerous that we read in Mark 3:6 that the Pharisees and the Herodians, who were total opposites and enemies of one another, plotted together to get rid of Him.

Of course, that a long time ago. Jesus is pretty harmless today, isn't He? No, He's not! Not the real Jesus. The real Jesus is more dangerous today than He was two thousand years ago.

As the Gospel of Mark tells his stories of Jesus in chapters 2-4, we see exactly why Jesus is dangerous.

I. Because He upsets our social status (2:17)

One of the most popular movies in 2011 was *The Help*. It is historical fiction, based on the novel by Kathryn Stockett. Set in Jackson, Mississippi, in the early 1960's, it tells about life when black women worked as maids for white women all over the South, and were often treated as less than human. The help were never allowed to sit at the same table or even use the same restrooms as their employers. Yet the maids were the ones who actually brought up the white children. One of the maids repeatedly tells a little white girl who is neglected by her mother, "You is kind, you is smart, and you is important." Even though the maid was being treated as unimportant herself, she reminds the little girl that she has value.

Jesus upset the social taboos of His own day when he went to eat dinner at the house of a tax collector named Levi. We read in Mark 3:15: "While He was reclining at the table in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also guests with Jesus and His disciples... When the scribes and Pharisees saw that He was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they asked His disciples, 'Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?'"

Notice that the same phrase is repeated three times: "tax collectors and sinners." When they used the word "sinners," they were using it as a technical term. This was a category of people. "Sinners" were people who failed to follow the religious law. Pharisees said the word with disgust in their voices. And nobody liked tax collectors, because they cheated people and worked for a foreign government.

Yet Jesus was eating with "those people." The Pharisees tried to pressure Him to stop. The Old Testament law said to keep oneself pure. How could Jesus associate with such people?

Jesus said in verse 17: "Those who are well don't need a doctor, but the sick do need one. I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners." Today, that would be like saying, "I came to call prostitutes, not Sunday School teachers."

Do you see why Jesus is dangerous? Why, if we acted like Him, we might have to go down to Savannah and love on homeless people. If we acted like Him, we might have to go out in the streets of Rincon and hand out food to people, and tell them, “You is important—to God.” This gets way outside our comfort zone. Dangerous stuff.

II. Because He replaces our religion (2:27-28)

Later in chapter two, Mark says that Jesus makes a shocking statement about the Sabbath, showing Jesus replaces our religion.

The Fourth Commandment says to keep the Sabbath Day holy (Exodus 20:8-11), because God rested on the seventh day of creation. The word *Sabbath* means “rest.” The Sabbath was very unique to Jews. No other religion had a day of rest like the Jews, and keeping the Sabbath set them apart from all other people. We need Sabbath rest today. With the craziness of our busy lives, we could all benefit from times of rest, worship, and reflection. But over the years, the Jewish rabbis had made up hundreds of rules about how to not work on the Sabbath. The rabbis had rules about how far you could walk before it was considered work, and how much you could harvest or cook before it was considered work. Their rules went to ridiculous extremes. So Mark 2:23 says that Jesus disciples picked some heads of grain on the Sabbath and ate it, and the Pharisees cried foul. “You can’t do that! That’s working on the Sabbath! You harvested wheat!”

Jesus replied, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” This statement in verse 27 is only found in the Gospel of Mark. The Sabbath was supposed to help people rest, not to be a burden to them. But it had become a rat race. Lily Tomlin said the trouble with the rat race is that even if you win, you are still a rat. (David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*, p. 124)

Unfortunately, religion often becomes an end in itself. People think if they keep all the religious rules, they are right with God. Jesus upsets the apple cart, and says it’s not about religion. Then He goes even farther, and claims that He Himself has authority to change it all, as He says in v. 28, “So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” Remember, “Son of Man” is Jesus’ term for Himself. So Jesus is saying, “It’s not about religious rules. It’s about a relationship with Me.”

Do you see why Jesus is dangerous? If this kind of teaching gets out, people will think they don’t have to keep the religious rules. They might run wild! They might think they can work on Sunday and who knows what else they might do.

III. Because He passes over our politics (3:6)

We are in the middle of a presidential election. Later this fall, the Republicans and Democrats will be fighting it out. In Jesus’ day, they had political parties, as well. The Pharisees were the defenders of traditional values. They stood for the nation of Israel, independent from Rome. The Herodians were the supports of Herod the Great and his

family who ruled after him. King Herod were under the authority of the Romans and supported the empire.

In Mark 3:1-5, what Jesus said about religion turned political. It was against their rules to heal on the Sabbath, but Jesus asked whether it was lawful to do good or evil on the Sabbath, and then He went ahead and healed the man. That was more than the Pharisees could take. So they went out and made an alliance with their political arch-enemies, the Herodians. Read it in Mark 3:6: “Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.”

Wow! Jesus was considered so dangerous, that it could bring the Republicans and the Democrats together for a joint session and a unanimous vote. Kill Him!

No political party has a monopoly on Jesus Christ. Politicians should not think they can press a certain hot button and have the evangelical vote. Christianity cannot be contained as a wing of a certain party and told to behave and sit down. When the Republicans are wrong on an issue, Christians must speak out, and when the Democrats are wrong on an issue, we must speak out. We must pray for our president, but our ultimate loyalty is not to him. Our ultimate loyalty is to Jesus Christ, not a government. Jesus is Lord over the Sabbath, and He is also Lord over all political alliances. Christ passes over politics.

That’s dangerous talk. People might think they don’t have to obey the government if we keep talking like that. Didn’t the early disciples say to their government, “We must obey God rather than men!” (Acts 5:29). Jesus is dangerous.

IV. Because He scares us about our sin (3:28-30)

Jesus said something in Mark 3:28 that may be the most dangerous thing we have read yet. He said, “I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.”

Wow! The unpardonable sin. That is a frightening thought, that we could commit an eternal sin that could never be forgiven. We read about it again in 1 John 5:16: “There is a sin that leads to death.”

There have been all kinds of speculation about what is the unpardonable sin. Many people think it is murder or rape or child molestation. Some churches teach that suicide is unpardonable, since it is self-murder and there is no opportunity to repent afterwards. But according to Mark 3, none of these are the unpardonable sin.

Look at the context of Jesus’ words. The Jewish religious leaders took another pot-shot at Jesus in Mark 3:22. They said the reason he had driven out demons was that Jesus was demon-possessed Himself. “By the prince of demons he is driving out demons,” they said. It was in response to being accused of being a demon that Jesus said that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven. Then just to make it clear this

applied to the words of the religious leaders, read Mark's comment in verse 30: "He said this because they were saying, 'He has an evil spirit.'"

Thus, they committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit because they said Jesus had an evil spirit. Clearly, *the unpardonable sin is rejection of Jesus Christ*.

That scares us. This goes completely against politically correct thinking. This means murderers and rapists and child molesters can be forgiven. It means a person can be forgiven of suicide. It also means that a law-abiding citizen who rejects Jesus Christ will not be forgiven and will go straight to hell. How narrow-minded is that? The world thinks we're crazy with that kind of thinking, but that's what Jesus says.

We would like to think that we can handle our own sin. We think as long as we're not murders or something we don't need to worry about our sin. But Jesus says we can't handle it without Him. Without Him we're hopelessly lost. Dangerous stuff.

V. Because He petrifies us with His power (4:41)

Yet there is one more reason that Jesus is dangerous. In Mark 4:36 we read that Jesus and his disciples got in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is 700 feet below sea level, and is surrounded by mountains. Mt. Hermon, located only 30 miles north of the sea, is 9,200 feet high. The cold air rushing down from the mountains hitting the warm air coming up from the water can turn into a sudden storm, and that is what happened to Jesus and His disciples that day.

Mark 4:37 calls it a "furious squall" that nearly swamped their boat. But verse 38 says Jesus was at the stern, sleeping on a cushion.

But what happened next was even more amazing. Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and waves, and said, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm."

You know what most Sunday School classes do with this story? They spiritualize it. The teacher says, "Jesus calmed the storm." Then the teacher looks around the room and says, "What storm are you going through?" Then people talk about Jesus helping them through their problems. But this is not a story about Jesus making us comfortable when our problems make us uncomfortable. This is a story that says with Jesus, we've got an even bigger problem.

When the storm started, the disciples were afraid. Jesus even asked them in verse 40, "Why are you so afraid?" But when Jesus showed His power to still the storm, verse 41 says they were "terrified."

There is a story of King Canute, the King of Denmark in the eleventh century. His courtiers were flattering him excessively, and he said, "Am I divine?" He walked to the seashore and said, "Stop," but the ocean waves kept coming in. What he was saying was, "Only God can stop the sea, and I'm not God." (Timothy Keller, *King's Cross*, p. 50).

If Jesus is Lord over the storm, He's Lord over everything. We can't tuck Him away during the week and pull Him out on Sunday. He won't stay tucked away. He is Lord over our social relationships and Lord over our religious rules and Lord over our

politics. But He is much more! He is Lord over our eternal destiny and able to pardon us forever to Heaven or sentence us forever to an eternity in Hell for rejecting Him, because He is Lord over all.

The storm had a power they could not control, and Jesus had infinitely more power, and they had less control over Him. That's dangerous. No wonder they were terrified. But here's the difference. A storm doesn't love you, but Jesus does.

A storm is indifferent; if you are in the path of the wind, you get blown away. But if you are in the path of the untamed love of Jesus, you are filled with His protection and care. A storm doesn't love you, but Jesus does.

Likewise, social rules and social taboos don't care about you. If you don't fit in with the right crowd, then tough luck. But Jesus cares about you and accepts you; He will break the social barriers to get to you and love you.

Religion doesn't care about you. If you don't fit into the rules, you're out. Religion doesn't love you, but Jesus does. He didn't design the Sabbath to burden you; He designed it to give you rest in His grace. He said, "Come to me, and I will give you rest."

Political parties and political machines don't care about you. When they don't need you, they will discard you. Political parties don't love you, but Jesus does. Make Jesus your resident president and you will never have to fear the unpardonable sin. In fact, you will *be* pardoned, forever.

Timothy Keller says that if the disciples had really understood that Jesus was both powerful and loving, they would not have been scared. They thought if Jesus loved them He wouldn't let bad things happen to them. They were wrong. He can love somebody and still let bad things happen to them, because He is God, and He knows better than they do.

Keller says, "If you have a God great enough and powerful enough to be mad at because he doesn't stop your suffering, you also have a God who's great enough and powerful enough to have reasons that you can't understand.... If you're at the mercy of the storm, its power is unmanageable and it doesn't love you. The only place you're safe is in the will of God." (Timothy Keller, *King's Cross*, p. 52)

Yes, Jesus is dangerous; you cannot control Him. But in the storm, there's no safer place to be than in His arms. He's dangerous, but because He's so powerful, He is able to take care of you. Will you trust your life to Him?

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