

Gospel of St. Mark Chapter Three

READ 3:1-6

INTRO: This section is another story of conflict with the Pharisees and centers, once again, on the Sabbath. Jesus enters into the synagogue, probably in the town of Capernaum. – [Orthodox Bible Study \(OBS\), Archpriest Lawrence Farley, 48-49](#)

Notice how everyone watches to see if He would heal the man on the Sabbath (the withered hand is probably paralyzed and useless). Their watching Him was almost like an "unspoken challenge." Jesus wastes no time to answer their question or challenge. Of course the Pharisees are furious that Jesus did not wait until after the Sabbath to heal. -[OBS 48-49](#)

OSB NOTE Lk 6:7 on works on the Sabbath

Jesus addresses a question to the crowd as if to get a ruling (from the synagogue) on a legal question. "Is it lawful..." (v. 4) -In other words which action, of the two available to Him on this Sabbath, is the best way to honor the day? Is a good deed permitted? The real question Jesus is trying to point to them to is what is the Godly course of action? -[OBS 48-49](#)

ICSB 3:4: Jesus may be alluding to a precedent of 1 Macc 2:41, where the Jews temporarily suspended Sabbath observance to permit defensive warfare. This was necessary to save life from military attacks on the Sabbath. Surely then Jesus should be able to heal a man's hand on the same day.

Put this way, there could only be one answer. Yet the crowd is silent. They either agreed with the Pharisees or were too intimidated to publicly disagree with them. -[OBS 48-49](#)

Q. How does Jesus feel about their silence? Their silence deeply grieves and angers Him b/c of their hardness of heart. The Greek word for anger is:

[ὀργή *orgē*, or-gay'; from [G3713](#); properly, desire (as a reaching forth or excitement of the mind), i.e. (by analogy), violent passion (ire, or (justifiable) abhorrence); by implication punishment:—anger, indignation, vengeance, wrath.]

OSB NOTE Mk 3:5

This should be a warning to us: As Christians we have to be courageous to speak up and do what's right for others (and not be cold hearted). So, in the sight of all, Jesus heals the man.

The Pharisees storm out immediately and plot with the Herodians how to destroy Him. The Herodians were supporters of Herod the Tetrarch. Usually the Pharisees had nothing to do with these politicians who cared little for the Mosaic Law. But they both wanted the same thing: Jesus out of the way. Herodians perceived Him as a threat to the peace and the Pharisees hated Him for supposedly ignoring the Law. -[OBS 48-49](#)

READ 3:7-12

OSB NOTE Mk 3:7

Intro: As Jesus' popularity continues to increase, He withdraws with His disciples to the sea of Galilee. In other words he leaves town. But the crowd follows Him and they're not just from Galilee, not just from Judea (in the south), and Jerusalem itself but people come from farther yet, from Idumea (farther south) and the other side of the Jordan and even from completely outside the borders of Israel in pagan Tyre and Sidon (farther up the north coast). - [OBS 51-52](#)

So now the people seeking healing are literally “falling on Him” (translated “pressed on Him,” v. 10) in their determination to be healed.

The unclean spirits (v. 11) also recognize Him in a weak attempt to prevent being driven out (from the demoniacs). St. Mark is showing us this to contrast the blindness of the Pharisees and their inability to recognize Him with the demons which can clearly see He is the Son of God. In other words, the Pharisees are blinder than the demons! -OBS 51-52

"He sternly warned them... not to make Him known" (v. 12)

OSB NOTE Mt 12:16-21a on our Lord's identity concealment

READ 3:13-19

Intro: Now our Lord in the midst of great popularity moves to select twelve men for a special role and destiny. Jesus goes up the mountain to pray (v. 13). According to the parallel story in Luke (6:12), Jesus spent the entire night in prayer. Jesus choosing the twelve (v. 14) is seen as the fruit of His prayer there. This is reminiscent of Moses who ascended Mount Sinai for prayer and communion with God. -OBS 53-55

OSB NOTE Mt 10:1-4 on the Twelve

The Twelve (v. 14) are appointed for a specific purpose: they are chosen to be His special companions, learning His teachings so they could convey them to others. They also are to share His authority to overthrow the kingdom of Satan and establish the Kingdom of God. They were not mere messengers but also bearers of His full authority, i.e. Apostles. -OBS 53-55

ICSB: 3:14 Apostles means "one who is sent out" as a messenger or emissary (Mt 10:5; CCC 858).

The number twelve is also significant. Just as the twelve sons of Jacob were to be fathers or Patriarchs of the People of Israel, so the Twelve Apostles are the fathers of the New messianic Israel, the Church. In other words, our Lord here is not just taking on helpers but laying the foundations for the renewed People of God. -OBS 53-55

Simon (v. 16) heads the list, since he is leader among the apostles. The Lord gives him the added name "Peter" meaning "rock." The Greek Petros translates the original Kefas (which is the language our Lord most likely used). It was something of a nick-name signifying Simon's rock-like fidelity -or stubbornness (sometimes our frailties also also our strengths). -OBS 53-55

This was a second name more than a complete name change and it had more significance than a mere nickname. More like Abraham (Gen 17:5) it had a more formal quality. It spoke of a change of destiny. The giving of a new name is a divine prerogative. Jesus can do this as Son of God. -OBS 53-55

James & John (v. 17) receive new names too. The term "Boanerges" seems to refer to their ability to thunder and react forcefully (such as when they felt insulted by Samaritan villagers and wanted to rain down fire from heaven upon them (Lk 9:52-54). -OBS 53-55

Next comes Andrew. He's separated from his brother Peter on the list by James and John b/c Peter, James and John formed the

Lord's "inner circle" of closest Apostles to Jesus. Q. Who knows anything significant about Andrew in our Byzantine tradition? He was martyred in Patras, Achaia (west Greece). -OBS 53-55

Philip was one of the early followers of the Lord. Bartholomew is most likely the same person as the Nathaniel mentioned in John's Gospel. It makes sense that these two are mentioned together b/c Philip and Nathaniel are mentioned together as friends in St. John's Gospel (Jn 1:45). -OBS 53-55

Next comes Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus (who is called 'Judas the son of James' in Luke 6:16; It is likely that Judas was his name and Thaddaeus his preferred nickname or surname). -OBS 53-55

Next is Simon the Cananean. The word Cananean is a translation of the Aramaic 'Qanna' or "zealous." So in St. Luke (6:15) he is called "the Zealot." He was probably a member of the Zealots, a group dedicated to the liberation of Israel by military force. His joining Jesus, the "Lamb of God" and the "Prince of Peace" is as radical a change as Matthew the former tax collector following Him. -OBS 53-55

Judas Iscariot is listed last for obvious reasons. B/c of his betrayal he came to be known as Judas the traitor (Jn 18:5). Judas was chosen like the others but eventually fell away from the Lord. We are all called to a special office as Christians and followers of Christ but we must persevere in faithfulness to Him. -OBS 53-55

READ 3:20-24

Intro: The point of this next story is to show in the face of growing opposition the disciples are becoming the Lord's true family and the true Israel. -OBS 57-59

They first return to a house that is probably that of Simon & Andrew which He had been using as the base of their operations in Capernaum. -OBS 57-59

"...they could not eat bread" in v. 20 means they did not even have time to eat.

It was perhaps out of concern for His health that His family originally came to Him. But notice what they think of His teaching (v. 21). What are some of the things they think He is out of His mind about? In 2:1f He claimed the authority to forgive sins. -OBS 57-59

Their unbelief is mirrored by the scribes from Jerusalem (v. 22). An official delegation is sent out concerned He is teaching heresy & false doctrine. They can't accept the thought He is from God since He does good works on the Sabbath. Therefore they attribute His miracles to demons. -OBS 57-59

OSB NOTE Mt 12:22-30 on "Beelzebub"

ICSB 3:22: Beelzebul: a pagan god worshipped at Ekron (2 Kings 1:2-16). The name probably meant Prince Baal. The scribes use it as a disdainful title for Satan.

READ 3:25-27

The Lord's response (v. 25) means if Satan has arisen against himself and has been divided-up, he would not be able to oppress men anymore. But clearly that was not the case. Satan's kingdom was obviously as strong as ever. -OBS 57-5

Satan was strong enough to keep his demon-possessed prey captive. Christ was only able to plunder Satan of his prey and liberate those poor souls b/c He first overpowered Satan with His divine messianic authority. -OBS 57-59

READ 3:28-30

Next, Christ makes a solemn pronouncement (v. 28-30). Literally He says, "Amen, I say to you" to indicate His divine authority and the certainty of His Word.

"All sins will be forgiven..." In other words, all sins can find forgiveness, if one repents. Q. What is repentance? But what the Pharisees were doing was different altogether. By saying Christ had an unclean spirit they were blaspheming the Holy Spirit. This was not a case of simple misjudgment by the Pharisees, but rather they were actually trying to stop the work of God on earth and Jesus knew what was in their hearts. Jesus was driving out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit and they were accusing Him of doing it by the power of the devil. P. 59 This is why Isaiah said in the OT: Woe to those who call evil good and good evil (Is 5:20). If you reject the very work of God as evil, this is a rejection of God Himself and, therefore, unforgivable if one remains in this state of rejection. -OBS 57-59

OSB NOTE Mt 12:32 for more on blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

READ 3:31-35

OSB NOTE Mt 12:46-50 on Jesus' relatives

Although we know that Jesus' brothers had doubted His mission and calling from God, it is unlikely His mother also did b/c she as Theotokos had received a heavenly visitation from the Archangel Gabriel, telling her that her virgin-born Son would be called the Son of God (Lk 1:35). She had witnessed Elizabeth's babe leap in her womb at Mary's visitation and been called the "Mother of my Lord" (Lk 1:41-42) She had experienced and witnessed the adoration of her Son by the wise-men and the shepherds and she had treasured all this in her heart (Lk 2:18-19). Q. Is it possible she had forgotten all this? -OBS 59-61

Not likely. More probably she was brought along by the brothers as a "bargaining chip" to coerce Jesus to stop teaching b/c He was an embarrassment perhaps to them and a liability to their family. -OBS 59-61

Christ responds by rejecting the claims of family authority. When it comes to doing the will of God our Father, human ties and authority are no longer binding. As Jesus said elsewhere, "I must do the will of Him who sent me." This sets a pattern for all Christians to follow, whenever there is a conflict b/t loyalty to God and loyalty to family. Loyalty to God and His Church (our new family) trumps all human ties. -OBS 59-61

Christ is Risen!

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