



41B PENTECOST 2B - BIBLE STUDY

The in-crowd

Abstract

33 "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.
34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."
Mark 3:34-35

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GOSPEL

Mark 3:20–35

²⁰ Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. ²¹ When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

²² And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

²³ So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. ²⁷ In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house. ²⁸ Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.”

³⁰ He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.”

³¹ Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

³³ “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked.

³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”ⁱ

Response

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

41B Pentecost 2B - Bible Study

The in-crowd

SUNDAY, JUNE 6, 2021 | AFTER PENTECOST | PROPER 5 | YEAR B

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament 1 Samuel 8:4–11 (12–15) 16–20 (11:14–15)

Psalm Psalm 138

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Genesis 3:8–15

Psalm Psalm 130

New Testament 2 Corinthians 4:13–5:1

Gospel Mark 3:20–35ⁱⁱ

Jesus draws crowds of followers in Galilee where his family are concerned about the fear and rumours that surround him. Mark uses a story within a story to increase the ever-present drama. Both stories speak of relationships and how we behave towards one another. Jesus redefines family as those who do the will of God and therefore redraws the boundaries for community.

This week, we tune into the subtle or loud voices that undermine the well-being of community, and we listen for the equally subtle or insistent voice that patiently restores us as individuals to community; to being part of God's in-crowd. It is hard to be fully aware of what is influencing us, and we need diverse and honest voices to help us see us as we really are.

This week we explore how what we say or do creates or breaks down community.ⁱⁱⁱ

Opening prayer

Loving Lord, you look us in the eye
and remind us that we are already part of your family.
Help us to let go of anything that gets in the way,
that we may love you with all our hearts,
and whole-heartedly love all our neighbours.
Amen.

Reading

Mark 3.20-35

Bible notes

This passage calls us to be brave in facing the conflict that can arise in response to one who brings God's blessing to others. In the early part of chapter three, Jesus healed many people, but he also called out the religious leaders in the synagogue on their legalism – they cared more about sabbath regulations than they did about the health of a worshipper. His question – 'Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?' (v.4) – has an obvious answer, but they resist it. They now see Jesus as their enemy. What happens next is very instructive. It is impossible to claim that the deeds of Jesus are not powerful, so they assert a conspiracy theory for the source of his

power: 'He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.' Don't trust him, this is all a con, his power is evil – this sounds just like a comment on social media rubbishing an individual or a movement! And it reminds us that there is nothing new under the sun. Hatred will always find a cover story and a way to dismiss the truth rather than respond to it. Jesus responds to them with logic and a warning. He points out that their accusation makes no sense, but that in closing their hearts and minds to the voice of God, they are risking their ability to listen to God in the future. After all, if the Holy Spirit is 'an unclean spirit', who is left to call us to repentance? Jesus' family members also spark a conflict, this time through their desire to protect him and keep him safe within their circle of identity. Yet Jesus resists their claims too. Creating a new community to serve God is his only criterion for his mission.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

A house divided against itself cannot stand. Central to Jesus' ministry was the vocation to oppose Satan and heal people of evil spirits. The undermining, destabilising effects of evil spirits on individuals and communities comes in many guises: the subtle voice of the serpent to Adam and Eve; the derisory voices suggesting Jesus was crazy; the accusing voices of the Scribes from Jerusalem; the ashamed voices of Jesus' family. Social media is known to compound negative mental health issues in impressionable young people. What are the voices that undermine our own communities and how do we confront them like Jesus?

Questions for reflection

Questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



- How does this image make you feel?
- How did you experience the building up of community at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What did you experience or observe that had the opposite effect?

Prayer

God of all the world,
 we praise you for calling us into your family,
 for choosing us even though we are imperfect,
 for trusting us even though we make mistakes,
 for not giving up on us even when we give up on ourselves,
 for offering so much more – even when we would settle for less.

God of all the world,
 for drawing us into a deeper relationship with you and with one another,
 we praise you –
 individually and together,

we praise you.
Amen.

Go with God 24/7

This week, make a conscious effort to reach out someone who seems to be somewhat on the edge of things, in or outside the church. Think of a way to make them feel more included and act on it. If you can't think of something specific, you could ask the person!

A prayer to end the Bible study

Loving God,
you sent your Son into your world
to gather us all up into your kingdom.
Be with us, as we hear and respond to your call to do the same.
Amen.

ⁱ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

ⁱⁱ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2021/113-may-june-2021-b/proper-5>