

**Text: Mark 3:7-12**

**Theme: Series-The Coming King Mark 1-8: The People and the King**

**Sermon delivered by Reverend Canon Dele Agbelusi during Morning Service on 22/10/2017 at 10.30am**

### **Jesus and the Crowd (vv. 7-10)**

Does Jesus want to draw large crowds? No! Are these crowds a sign of success? No! We must not forget that Jesus has a hard time preaching because of all those coming to him desiring physical healing. In chapter 1, when faced with the "crowd" dilemma, he had to clarify the purpose of His mission and ministry. And that is to proclaim the good news of God's kingdom.

However, Jesus continues to heal people, for at least three reasons: as an expression of his compassion, as a verification of his deity (Mark 2:10), and as an illustration of the truths he is proclaiming but he never uses healing to attract crowds; indeed, he never tries to attract crowds at all. Instead, he silences the demons who try to call attention to him, and rejects (during his temptation in the wilderness) Satan's suggestions that he use his miraculous powers to play to the crowd. How contrary to techniques used by many churches and parachurch organizations today!

Mark tells us that a large crowd' (v. 7), from a wide geographical location (v. 8), were 'crowding Jesus'. So much so, in fact, that 'he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding (crushing) him' (v. 9). There was a frenzy with this crowd. They were not coming to Jesus to be taught by Him, but to have their felt needs met - 'those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him' (v. 10). Like a preacher looking out at his congregation on a Sunday, it is difficult to discern true motives in a crowd. Do you follow the crowds? Do you like a popular speaker or a crowded church? That is not wrong. But to follow Jesus means much more than following the crowds.

What are the crowds really after? What are they looking for? They we're excited about Jesus. They wanted Jesus to heal them or perhaps witness the next miracle. That's why often in the Gospels Jesus challenges His disciples to come away from the crowds, from the mixed motives, from the group hysteria, the clueless crowd, to follow Him. How often do you act like the crowd? It's easy to look like a Christian, singing worship songs in a large crowd on a Sunday. But discipleship is seen less in the Sunday pew and more in the Monday office, or school, or staff room or at home. **Who are we when there isn't a crowd to hide behind?**

### **Jesus and Evil spirits (vv. 11-12)**

The fascinating aspect of this passage is that the frenzied, confused crowds are contrasted negatively with demons. The evil spirits knew who Jesus is. When they 'saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God"' (v. 11). The clearest confessions of who Christ is, in this first half of Mark, come from demons! But they don't repent. Jesus Christ preached that the kingdom is at hand and that people should repent and believe in the good news of God. **The evil spirits had a right theology but no repentance.**

**Right proclamation but wrong application.** The demons do not act on the knowledge. If you claim to know the Lord Jesus Christ, let your knees proclaim it as you intercede for our world and your world. Let your feet demonstrate it as you labour to bring others to the presence and experience of Jesus.

We must ask, "Why did Jesus so sternly warned the evil spirit to remain silent?" The reason was very simple and very compelling. Jesus was the Messiah, God's anointed king; but his idea of Messiahship was quite different from the popular idea. He saw in Messiahship a way

of service, of sacrifice and of love with a cross at the end of it. The popular idea of the Messiah was of a conquering king who, with his mighty armies, would blast the Romans and lead the Jews to world power. Therefore, if a rumour were to go out that the Messiah had arrived, the inevitable consequence would be rebellions and uprisings, especially in Galilee where the people were ever ready to follow a nationalist leader.

### **Jesus and the called ones (vv. 13-19)**

We have seen that many Jews including the religious leaders do not want Jesus and recognise him as their Messiah. They hate him because he will not keep their rules. So now Jesus turns away from them (Mark 3:7) and chooses 12 people to be his special disciples. From now on, Jesus will take special care to teach his disciples. He does still teach the crowds, but Jesus mostly wants to teach these 12 disciples.

There's a little phrase in this passage about Jesus calling His disciples that we very easily skip over, but we mustn't, because it is the most important part of knowing Jesus. When Jesus calls His disciples to Him, we are told why. And there are two reasons:

**(Verse 14). Jesus called His disciples, first and foremost, because He wanted to be with them.** And He has called you for exactly the same reason. **The second is the reason we expect: 'that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons' (v. 15).**

Clearly Jesus wanted His disciples to go out and take the message of the kingdom to a lost world. But the first reason He called them was 'that they might be with him'. He called them out of the crowd. He appoints them and designates them for service. **Called, Appointed and designated, just as he did for Abraham, Moses, David, Paul. They are the new people of God, the people of the King.**

**Many people think that we have to choose Jesus. That is partly true. However, in the Bible Jesus always chooses us first! (John 15:16) In Mark 3, the crowds who choose Jesus for the wrong reason, will soon go away from him. But the disciples whom Jesus chooses, stay with him.**

Jesus names His disciples, to be part of the new family of God, one by one, 'Simon ... John ... Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew ...' He knows us by name. He is personally acquainted with all our needs, and He wants to be with us. Some disciples are named here who are never named again in Mark's Gospel. But they are not disciples simply because they do important things for Jesus. They are disciples because He called them to be 'with him'.

As Martha discovered (Luke 10:38-42), we can exhaust ourselves so much doing good things, we miss out on 'the best', sitting at Jesus' feet. Let this thought go with you today and always: '[He] called ... those he wanted ... that they might be with him'.

### **Jesus and the religious leaders. (vv. 20-35)**

**In this section, the religious leaders call Jesus a bad man working for the king of the demons, while members of his family call him a mad man.**

Does it surprise you that some people hate Jesus so much? Why, when he only does good things? The Jews in Mark 3:22 are important leaders. Many people listen to them. What they say about Jesus that he is an agent of the devil is so unfair. Can you understand why they hate Jesus so much? Of course, Jesus is not working for the devil! If he were working for the devil, he would not drive out demons! **Jesus shows that what they say is nonsense and stupid (Mark 3:23-27).**

The Jewish leaders thought they were going to heaven. They thought that they were at the top of the list. But no one who hates Jesus has God's forgiveness.

**This passage is the one that famously inspired C.S. Lewis to ask if Jesus was mad, bad or God.** Jesus' own family (Mary, and presumably His younger brothers, James and Jude and others) think He is mad. His ministry is so hectic He barely has time to eat, and He keeps on casting out demons and claiming victory over Satan. So, they come to 'take charge of him' (v. 21).

If Jesus' family think He is mad, the jealous religious leaders claim He is bad, casting out demons with the help of 'the prince of demons' (v. 22). If they had taken a few minutes to think, they would have realized how ridiculous that suggestion was, for it would mean 'a kingdom is divided against itself' (v. 24).

The central theme of these contrasting passages is control. Jesus' family want to control Christ because He is too radical for their liking. The religious leaders want to control Christ because He is too dangerous, threatening to turn their power base upside down.

### **The Verdict of His Own Immediate Family (vv. 20-21)**

Jesus went into a house; and once again so dense a crowd collected that they could not even eat bread. When his own people heard What was going on, they went out to restrain him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

**(i) Jesus had left home and the carpenter's business at Nazareth.** No doubt it was a flourishing business from which he could at least have made a living; and quite suddenly he had flung the whole thing up and gone out to be a wandering preacher. He had thrown away security. The one thing that most people in this world want more than anything else is just that. They want above all things a job and a position which are secure, and where there are as few material and financial risks as possible.

**(ii) Jesus was obviously on the way to a head-on collision with the orthodox leaders of his day.** There are certain people who can do to a man a great deal of harm, people on whose right side it is better to keep, people whose opposition can be very dangerous. He had thrown away safety. Most people tend at all times to play safe. They are more concerned with the safety of any course of action than with its moral quality, its rightness or its wrongness. A course of action which involves risk is something from which they instinctively shrink.

**(iii) Jesus had newly started a little society of his own-and a very queer society it was.** There were some fishermen; there was a reformed tax-collector; there was a fanatical nationalist. They were not the kind of people whom any ambitious man would particularly want to know. They certainly were not the kind of people who would be any good to a man who was set on a career. No sensible man, they must have been thinking, would pick a crowd of friends like that. They were definitely not the kind of people a prudent man would want to get mixed up with.

**(iv) He had shown himself utterly indifferent to the verdict of society.** He had shown that he did not much care what men and the religious powers that be said about him. In point of fact, as H. G. Wells said, for most people "the voice of their neighbours is louder than the voice of God." "What will people say?" is one of the first questions that most of us are in the habit of asking. What appalled Jesus' friends was the risks that he was taking, risks which, as they thought, no sensible man would take.

'Calm down, Jesus. Be more reasonable; is the message that rings out from family and Pharisee alike. And that is the same message many of us want to hear and are comfortable

with. We do not realize how radical Jesus is, calling for total commitment and taking Satan's territory by storm.

We want a more reasonable Christ who fits in snugly with how we want to do church. But Jesus will not be controlled. Rather, He is the one in control, powerful enough to dethrone Satan (v. 27), and radical enough to ask people to leave everything to follow Him.

Is your God too small? Have you settled for a pale caricature of Christ you feel comfortable with, and lost sight of the real Jesus who calls you to die to yourself, set aside every competing allegiance, take up your cross and follow Him?

### **The Unforgiveable Sin (vv. 28-30)**

Many people are afraid that they have done the sin that cannot be forgiven. Mark 3:28 is very clear. All sins can be forgiven. We may have said something terrible about Jesus. God will forgive us if we ask him. The sin (or 'blasphemy') against the Holy Spirit is something different. The people in Mark 3 refuse to see who Jesus is. Jesus does wonderful things and they say that he has a devil! If the Holy Spirit shows us who Jesus is, and we hate Jesus, then we cannot be forgiven. If you love Jesus and want him to forgive you, then you have not done this sin.

### **From the Crowd to the Centre (vv. 31-35)**

Who are the members of the new family of Jesus, because his own family did not all love him? (Mark 3:20-21). They said that Jesus was crazy. They tried to stop Jesus from doing his work. They did not think Jesus should work so hard and care so much. Do you care like Jesus? Or do you think that a little religion is enough? Do you think that following Jesus must not take over your life? Think carefully if you really love Jesus?

Jesus' true family does what Jesus says (Mark 3:31-35). Jesus does not go at once to see his brothers and mother. This is a real shock to the people! But Jesus says that his true family are the people with him. They are the people who listen to what he says. And they do the will of God.

Here Jesus lays down the conditions of true kinship. It is not solely a matter of flesh and blood. It can happen that a man is really nearer to someone who is no blood relation to him at all than he is to those who are bound to him by the closest ties of kin and blood. Wherein lies this true kinship?

(i) **True kinship lies in a common experience**, especially when it is an experience where two people have really come through things together.

(ii) **True kinship lies in a common interest.**

(iii) **True kinship lies in a common obedience.** The disciples were a very mixed group. All kinds of beliefs and opinions were mixed up among them. A tax-collector like Matthew and a fanatical nationalist like Simon the Zealot ought to have hated each other like poison and no doubt at one time did. But they were bound together because both had accepted Jesus Christ as Master and Lord.

Some people hate Jesus and refuse to believe. The new family of Jesus does what Jesus says. There is no middle group. Many people want to be in the middle. They do not want to hate Jesus, and they do not want to follow Jesus. If they are not 'for' Jesus, then they are 'against' Jesus. Which group do you belong to?