

## Introductory

We can divide this reading into three sections, *Harper Study Bible* style; the name calling (20-27), the unforgivable sin (28-30), and the true family (31-35). The information about Jesus' family wanting to take Him away is exclusive to Mark, and Matthew (12: 22-45) and Luke (11: 14-23) record the first of the three sections, but not exactly like Mark.

The second section, the unforgivable sin, is exclusive to Mark, and both Matthew and Luke say very similar things as the third section, the one about family matters. In the TLH one-year lectionary, the reading for Oculi is Luke 11:14-28. In LW, this is the text for Pentecost 4B. No parallels are appointed in the LW or LSB three-year lectionary.

As always, when we have what may appear on first glance to be three separate incidents, we try to determine how to best put them together into one thought, the main point of the pericope. What seems to be in question here is the very identity of Jesus, and the seriousness of understanding and confessing that identity, and the consequences of not.

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You may or may not know about a teaching called the Perpetual Virginity of Mary, which holds that Mary remained a virgin for her entire life. The Bible not only makes it clear but makes a big deal of the fact that Mary was a virgin at the time of the conception of Jesus, her eldest. Of all the Evangelists, Matthew hammers home the Virgin Birth.

When Matthew tells us that Joseph did not know Mary *until* after Jesus was born, he is telling us two things; firstly, that they didn't have relations before the conception of Jesus and secondly, that they *did* have those relations after He was born. The R.C. church and Martin Luther believed and taught that Mary remained a virgin for her entire life.

Such teaching not only goes against the biblical record and what would normally be expected from a married couple, but it is not at all necessary that Mary abstain from marital relations after the birth of Jesus. There is nothing wrong with sex in marriage, and it is expected that as a matter of course Mary and Joseph would have engaged in it.

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## Family

The material about Jesus' family coming to take Him away is found only here in Mark. It seems as if they are embarrassed by their relative, who seems to think that He's the Messiah, which is probably how most of us would feel if one of our children, or a sibling, was acting like that.

It's the way that many relatives feel when one of theirs becomes a Christian, or God forbid when he becomes a pastor. There will no doubt be such people from such families, who have been so rejected, sitting in the pew, and for whom this incident will generate a great deal of pathos.

This would be a good time to talk about family, a topic of great interest to most Christians. But when you talk about family, remember that a lot of your hearers don't have much family, and a lot of them are from families that are variously whacked. To talk about family is to talk to people about their being failed and their own failures.

The Law tells people how to be a good spouse, parent, or child, and they can get that any day from *Focus on the Family*, and Dobson can probably do it better than we do. The Gospel is that we are now a part of God's family, which is generally not quite as whacked – but it has its moments – as the other family.

Focus on the Gospel, which will be especially meaningful for those who don't have families, or whose family is not the stuff of fairy tales, or for whom family means mostly bad things, not good things. Make them feel good by knowing that they are a part of a larger family of God, including “angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven.”

In a day when both Christianity and the family are increasingly under siege in our country, we need to encourage Christian families to persevere. The April 2, 2012 *National Review* contains an article by Mary Eberstadt, a good Roman Catholic, entitled “Sexual Counterrevolution.” She is guardedly optimistic about the future of that with us.

She cites birth control and the ability to choose not to have children as the main cause of the human inclination to act like animals. But she says that the social science gurus, the people who are actually listened to today, are starting to document what the Christians have known all along; acting like animals may work for animals, but not for humans.

<http://www.nationalreview.com/nrd/articles/293631/sexual-counterrevolution>

### **The Sin Against the Holy Ghost**

My first contact with The Unforgivable Sin was in Junior Confirmation class back in the 60s. I'm not sure why the pastor was addressing those three verses in Mark to children who were struggling with the meaning of Baptism, but he was, and he said that this sin was a really, really bad sin, a sin that was...well...unforgivable, that's how bad it is.

One adolescent male wondered if maybe he himself had committed the unforgivable sin. He asked the pastor, “how bad?” The pastor explained that it had to be a really, really, really bad sin. “How bad?” the adolescent persisted. The pastor explained to the troubled young man that if you were worried about it, then you hadn't committed it.

That comforted the adolescent male. Americans especially, because we are Americans, we have a tendency to think of verses like these three and others in terms of the individual. We ought rather to think of these verses and the sin that it talks about in corporate terms, in terms of the group, the congregation, the nation, the church body.

The most obvious reason for so thinking is that those three verses are spoken to a group including a crowd, scribes and the laymen who were listening to Jesus, who was in a house. They were not spoken to an individual. The reason not so obvious is that telling people what that pastor told that young man doesn't really make a whole lot of sense.

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Jesus and the religious leaders actually got off to a good start. Mark doesn't tell us, but Matthew and John relate how Jewish religious leaders who came to be baptized by John were there for the Baptism of Jesus, and there is not conflict. And then Jesus does things – like preaching and doing miracles – that seem to annoy the religious leaders.

At the beginning of chapter two, Mark records the healing and then the absolution of the paralytic, which made the scribes very cross. Conflict ensues over the rules for religious rites like fasting and the Sabbath, and immediately prior to this reading Jesus commissions or appoints the Twelve – what did that mean? Then “He went into a house.”

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### Textual Notes

**20.** Regarding the current location of Jesus, “Καὶ ἔρχεται εἰς οἶκον – and He comes into a house.” Some translations say Jesus “went home.” Some say He “went into a house.” Others leave the phrase out altogether. The word here for the place into which He went is “οἶκος,” and in the NT it can mean either “house” or “home,” or both, like in American.

There is a word for “building – δόμος,” and it speaks of a physical structure. The word is used several times in the NT (Acts 2:2, 19:16), but that word is not used here. Almost always, when the word οἶκος is used, a modifier of some sort is also present, usually an article or a pronoun, and that modifying word more specifically identifies the house.

These days, we might talk about “the house next door” or “the house belonging to Mary,” or something like that to distinguish one house from another. When I talk about my house, I’m talking about my home, and when I talk about my home I’m talking about my house. But here it’s just οἶκος, a house or a home, and nothing is noteworthy about it.

Location matters. Are we in Iowa or Georgia? Are we in town or in the country? Are we in an auditorium or in a house or a tavern or a church? Here we are in a house, a very intimate setting which will soon become very crowded, and the house is located close to His hometown, making it easier for the family to just show up and do what they do here.

Four paragraphs may seem like too much to spend on the word οἶκος, but when you are telling a story, and a good sermon preaches like a story, it is important to place the hearer in the setting of the story. Not all places were the same in the time of Jesus or us. Either the house was in Nazareth, or family came from Nazareth to another place to see Jesus.

Wherever exactly Jesus is located, we know that it's not *His* house because “foxes have dens and birds have nests” but Jesus does not even have a place to lay His head. In verse thirty-one, the mother and brothers of Jesus come to Him, and they are outside the house, not just walking in, which implies that the house did not belong to any of them either.

It's a house, and there were people in that house, lots of people, “καὶ συνέρχεται πάλιν ὁ ὄχλος – and the crowd again gathered together.” The verb is in the present tense, placing us at the scene, The noun with the definite article – the crowd – almost makes it seem like the body was a fixed unit, and it was, but fluid, with people constantly coming and going.

Indeed, “the crowd” is commonly to be found where Jesus is found, though almost certainly the exact makeup of the group was changeable. Different people are in the crowd at different times, individuals and groups come and they go, and the size of the unit grows and shrinks. This group is distinguished from disciples and from Apostles.

The crowd – sometimes plural –are people who are interested in Jesus, who was a very interesting Guy. The disciples – sometimes singular – are those who have on some level bought into Jesus. They thought of themselves as Christians. The Apostles are Twelve and Seventy and more chosen by Jesus and later by the Church for the Apostolic Office.

Mark describes the crowds here as being very large, so large, in fact, that “ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι αὐτοὺς μηδὲ ἄρτον φαγεῖν – that they were not even able to eat.” One would be inclined to regard the “too crowded to eat” as hyperbole, but you've probably been to parties or other gatherings like that, where making it to the food is an arduous odyssey.

More likely, the phrase was an idiom common to them, lost over time to us. Idiom does not appear in a vacuum, but it arises for a reason. People did not just start saying “you're pulling my leg” or “it's raining cats and dogs” or “it was too crowded to eat.” Here, we go back to that party and the arduous journey to discern the probable cause of this idiom.

**21.** It says that “ἀκούσαντες οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ – those from Him heard.” The KJV calls them “friends,” and most of the other translations call them “family.” But if they were either of those, why not just use those words, which were common in the language? Voelz says that “οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ” is “a standard phrase for relatives/family members...”

He uses that phrase instead of family to note the irony of what is about to happen. What happens is that having heard things about Jesus, those from Him “ἐξῆλθον κρατῆσαι αὐτόν· ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη – came forth to take Him, because they said ‘He is nuts.’” Exactly what had they “heard” about Him that would cause them to do what they do?

Was it just that they had heard that He was in a house, and the house was really packed? Had they heard of the many miracles He had so far performed? Had they heard of the confrontations with the Establishment? Right before this, He has firmed up the identity of the Twelve. Did they see in that the coming opposition, leading to His death (6)?

The verb “ἐξήλθον – came forth” is an active verb indicating deliberate action. It does not mean that they just happened along. It says that they wanted “κρατησαι – to sieze” Him. That verb is common, and it does not mean an invitation or a request to come with us, but to the physical and even violent use of force to remove somebody against His will.

It says that the family expressed their rationale from coming to take Him away “ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη – saying, ‘He is beside Himself.’” I don’t study every word every week with equal thoroughness, but I want to have a good understanding of the meaning of the aorist verb “ἐξέστη – He is beside Himself,” a phrase that has come down to us today.

Exactly what was the family of Jesus seeing in Him when they came to snatch Him away, by force if necessary? The word has various nuances, all of them having to do with some sort of emotional or mental instability. The word “ἐξίστημι – beside Himself,” occurs seventeen times in the NT. Usually it is correctly translated with words like “amazed.”

I might use words like “gobsmacked” or “flummoxed” – words that do not have any connotation of craziness. Just because I say to somebody “you’re nuts” does not mean that I think them to be mentally ill or even at all emotionally fraught. We would use that term “you’re nuts,” with a loved one to tell him that his course of action is dangerous.

The word is actually a compound of “out” and “stand.” The root meaning then is that of a person standing outside of Himself. They may here be making the case that Jesus doesn’t really know what He’s doing, or that this isn’t the real Jesus, the Jesus we know, who is really a very nice person and a good neighbor. Maybe it’s His meds. Probably.

We see in 2 Corinthians 5:13 that people seem to be saying that Paul and his Homes are “ἐξίστημι” because he writes the conditional “is we are ἐξίστημι, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.” In Acts 26:24, Festus accuses Paul of being “μαίνομαι.” The translations use “mad,” and the word means being very angry and maybe losing it.

**22.** Enter “οἱ γραμματεῖς οἱ ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων καταβάντες – the Scribes, who had come down from Jerusalem.” Since Jerusalem was “up,” and this incident took place at sea level, they are said to literally “come down” from Jerusalem, a long and difficult journey into these hinterlands of Galilee, apparently for the sole purpose of calling Jesus names.

Of Jesus, they say, “Βεελζεβοὺλ ἔχει – He *has* Beelzebul,” just like the KJV and other older translations render it. The recent translations want to say that Jesus is possessed by Beelzebul, but it doesn’t. I suppose you could make the argument that it’s the same thing, but I would make the argument that the task of the translator is to translate the text.

And besides that, it's not the same thing. The verb is active, not passive, and the idea is that Jesus *possesses* Beelzebul, a present tense verb that says that Jesus is hanging on to Beelzebul like a toddler hangs on to his pacifier or teddy bear. He holds on to Satan, say the Scribes, not the other way around, and there's a reason for that, they go on to say.

Jesus holds on to Satan, they say, “ὅτι ἐν τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαιμόνια – because by the ruler of demons, He casts out demons.” The difference is this; if Jesus is *possessed by* (passive voice) Beelzebul, then it is Beelzebul who is calling the shots, but if Jesus *possessed* (active voice) Beelzebul, then it is Jesus who is calling the shots.

It's not the same thing. It is significant is that the enemies of Jesus acknowledge what they here acknowledge; that Jesus is doing supernatural things. These days many – including many who bear the name of Christ – refuse to acknowledge that Jesus did those kinds of things, and a lot of them ridicule and mock those of us who believe that He did.

They are led in their unbelief by the Bible scholars and their toady local clergy. Those of us who believe that Jesus did what the Bible says He did would expect nothing less – as a matter of course – from the Son of God. And those mockers are the same who don't believe Jesus *is* the Son of God, which explains why they don't think He did miracles.

It all comes down to what you think about Jesus. But lest we get the idea that the Scribes are Orthodox Lutherans, let us note that the Scribes acknowledge that Jesus casts out demons, but they mention no other miracles. He has to this point done a lot of healing and forgiven sins, but no mention here of that. They may be going somewhere with this.

Such luminaries as Jerome, the man who translated the Vulgate, and the rock band *Queen* who in 1975 recorded “Bohemian Rhapsod,” put a “b,” not an “l” at the end of Beelzebul, making it Beelzebub, “Lord of the Flies,” who was an Ekronite god (1 Kings 2:1). Everybody else has the word as Beelzebul, which means “Lord of the Dung Heap.”

Here we may be splitting theological hairs; where you have one – dung – you will have the other – flies – and we get the point; Lord of the dung hill, Lord of the flies; these are not complimentary and are meant to be inflammatory. The term was also likely an idiom, and I suppose all peoples of all times and places use derogatory phrases involving dung.

Why would these men come all the way over here to call Jesus names? Earlier in this chapter (11) we see “unclean spirits” bowing down and worshipping Jesus as “The Son of God.” It would have been a public and noteworthy thing, and these men are trying to square that with their theological pre-suppositions about Jesus. And to call Him names.

**23.** Jesus responds to their inflammatory words by telling a story, “προσκαλεσάμενος αὐτοὺς ἐν παραβολαῖς ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς – calling them to Him, He was speaking to them in parables.” The verb “προσκαλεσάμενος – calling” is an aorist participle – one-time action. The verb “ἔλεγεν – telling” is imperfect – continuous action. Parables is plural.

In the next few verses (24-26) Mark tells us what those parables were. Almost certainly Mark's words summarize longer – perhaps much longer – stories that Jesus told to make the points that Mark relates to us. They are very short sayings, just a little bit too long to be a metaphor and a little bit too short to be a full-blown parable; an extended metaphor.

We may rightly conclude that Mark gives us the gist of the parable, and that Jesus said more words than are recorded here. If that makes us uncomfortable, remember that John specifically tells us that he doesn't tell us nearly all there is to tell about Jesus. Recall also that we likewise will often summarize a story or an incident using fewer words.

The answer to, "What did the President say in his State of the Union address?" is not to recite the entire speech, and when you tell somebody why you became a pastor, you edit heavily, depending on context. If it's good material, a good story or sermon, I will tell it more than once, but to a different crowd. So also do the inspired writers of the Bible.

This is good material, and it's entirely possible that Jesus told these parables more than once, and the summary given here is almost like that old joke where the guy says, "number three" and people laugh, and "number seven" and people laugh, and the punch line is that we've heard these jokes so many times, we just refer to them by number.

Nevertheless, we can get the meaning of those parables by reading what Mark gives us. And just what is what is the identity of "them," to whom Jesus here directs His words? They would include firstly the crowds, who are already in the house, and mostly the Scribes, who have just come, and who are clearly the focus of the words of Jesus.

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A man who teaches at the ELCA college in town writes a weekly column in the local newspaper. He generally confines his remarks to politics, his bailiwick. A few years ago, he wandered off the reservation and into the realm of my bailiwick. I responded in opposition to him on the Op-Ed page, and then I let my people know what was going on.

Even though that exchange did not involve my people, I made sure they knew what was going on. I wanted them to know what's out there, that there's an ELCA professor who says that Islamic Terrorism is no different from the way Christians handle their business. I also want them to know what I say to rebut such sophistry, so they can do the same.

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The first of those parables, spoken in response to the name calling, asked the logical question, "Πῶς δύναται Σατανᾶς Σατανᾶν ἐκβάλλειν – how is Satan able to cast out Satan?" The interrogative "πῶς – how" can also ask the question "why," but here the interrogative is followed by the verb "δύναμαι – able," so "how," not "why" is better.

Feel free at this point in preaching or teaching to use more common groups than Satan and his legions fighting against one another to better communicate the absurdity of the

accusation that Jesus is Satan. Take soldiers, for example. How absurd, pointless, utterly futile and counterproductive it would be for soldiers to shoot at those on your own side.

And how silly it would be for football players to start tackling each other when there are plenty of players on the other team who need to be tackled, and you think you're going to win the game? That's how absurd would it be if Jesus were Satan to be fighting against Satan. Jesus is decidedly not, as the Scribes had argued, on the same side as Satan.

**24.** Using Logic, the science of correct thinking, Jesus here talks about just such a scenario, the absurdity of any Kingdom fighting against itself, pointing out that such a Kingdom will not long be able to stand. There are ample examples of that very thing, historically and currently, including current America, where we fight against ourselves.

**25.** Quoting Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, "ἐὰν οἰκία ἐφ' ἑαυτὴν μερισθῇ, οὐ δυνήσεται ἡ οἰκία ἐκείνη στήναι – should a house against itself be divided, that the house will not be able to stand." The appearance of the word "οἰκία," the feminine form of the masculine "οἶκος" is interesting. Besides "house" and "home," the word can also refer to a family.

Such comes down to us in things like "The House of Windsor," to refer to the family of Charles III, or "The House of Tudor" to the family of Elizabeth I. Here Jesus is making essentially the same point that He made in the previous verse, only now He's making it personal; His own "house," or family, is against Him, and that's not a good thing.

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As noted above, even the social scientists have observed the decline of family in our time and place. Where families do exist on the nuclear level – mother, father, and children – they are often not tight, and in fact by adulthood many have become fractured, jealous, and hateful. We all see this happen all the time, and you may even see it in your own.

It only gets worse when it comes to extended family. It hasn't always been like that. Family was the most important social unit in the time of Jesus, and the nuclear family was a very structured and stable entity. Whereas today most people lose contact with even first cousins, in the time of Jesus the extended family was important as well.

Divorce happened, but rarely, and the norm was for the nuclear family to stay together and to remain tight with one another and also with their extended family. We have examples of this in Mary's visit to her relative Elizabeth and the presence of her sister Salome at the cross. Jesus was related to John the Baptizer and first cousin to The Twins.

It must have been a rare thing for a mother and siblings to turn on a son and brother, like they do here. But they would not have seen it to be that. They were concerned for the family member, but more to the point, what an embarrassment to the family this would have been! And of all the things that are kept "in house," this thing would be most.



**26.** Continuing to use Logic and moving from the general to the specific – to Himself – He puts forth the hypothetical “εἰ ὁ Σατανᾶς ἀνέστη ἐφ’ ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἐμερίσθη – if Satan has risen up against himself,” going now back to their original accusation against Him, “οὐ δύναται στήναι ἀλλὰ τέλος ἔχει – (he will) not be able to stand, but an end comes.”

**27.** Another emphatic “but – ἀλλά,” followed by another short parable, this one about home invasion; people invading your house to steal your stuff. It goes without saying that if one man is going to enter the house of another man for the purpose of stealing his possessions, that homeowner is not going to sit idly by while his stuff is pilfered.

A “strong man” especially – and these days that would be a man with a gun – is not going to let that happen, so the first thing the thief has to do is tie the homeowner up. Having done that, the crook is free to steal at his leisure. Far from being on the side of Satan, Jesus is the man who is breaking into Satan’s house, the World – and ties him in knots.

Even as we speak, He’s in the process of tying him up so that He can plunder his kingdom; the World The plundering of the Kingdom of Satan by Jesus happens ultimately on the cross. Jesus breaks into the domain of Satan, and on the cross He once and for all pays for all sins, gets forgiveness, and destroys the power of Satan to accuse.

He then enters into the domain of Satan in Hell to pronounce to him on his home court that He has won the victory over sin, death, and you, Satan. The victorious Resurrection of the Son is the Father’s pronouncement that the sacrifice of the Son is acceptable, and His rising from the dead is a vivid picture of the defeat by Jesus of sin, death, and Satan.

**28.** Now He talks as if He thinks that some kind of sin has been committed. To identify that sin, which has come to be called “The Sin Against the Holy Spirit,” we ought to note that these words do not occur outside of context. No words do. These words are spoken in the context of the accusation made by Satan – by his spokesmen – against Jesus.

Speaking to more than one person, He says “Ἀμην λέγω ὑμῖν – truly I say to you,” which means that this is going to be hard to hear. He says, “πάντα ἀφεθήσεται τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, τὰ ἁμαρτήματα καὶ αἱ βλασφημίαι, ὅσα ἐὰν βλασφημήσωσιν – all will be forgiven the sons of men, the sins of blasphemy, whatever they should blaspheme.”

These comments are not directed at His family, who were saying that He’s nuts, but rather at the Scribes, who had said that He possesses Satan. In fact, Mark tells us just that two verses later (30), where he says that, “ὅτι ἔλεγον Πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον ἔχει – because they said that He has an unclean spirit.” Forgiveness is all-encompassing. Almost.

**29.** But there is one sin that is *not* able to be forgiven. The category of person not eligible is described; “ὅς δ’ ἂν βλασφημήσῃ εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον – whoever moreover anyhow should blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.” At its root, blasphemy is evil words spoken against people, particularly against God, and Jesus gets blasphemed a lot.

But what He talks about here is not that, but blasphemy against the Third Person of the Trinity. The person who does that, Jesus says “οὐκ ἔχει ἄφεσιν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ ἔνοχός ἐστιν αἰωνίου ἁμαρτήματος – will not ever have forgiveness into eternity, but is guilty of an everlasting sin,” and that sentence and its components are very absolute.

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### **Sin Against the Holy Spirit**

It's like this; going back as far as I can, my ancestors have been in the Church. After the Reformation my father's people were in the Lutheran Church and my mother's people were in the Anglican and RC communions. Each generation of my ancestors passed down to the next Christianity via the Word, Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar

Some did it better than others. These things are the means that God uses to send the Holy Spirit, from whom come life and the forgiveness of sins. It only takes one or two generations to *not* pass that on for the Holy Spirit to be quenched, and the generation of quenched Spirit will not be passing it on to their children. We see it happen all the time.

In a larger sense, and the more specific application of the Sin Against the Holy Spirit, congregations and church bodies who drive out the Word and Sacrament thereby drive out the means of grace, and in doing so they with it drive out the atonement, some of them to the point they drive out pastors who preach and the Word in its truth and purity.

We are talking about nations in former times that rejected Christianity, and we are talking about congregations and church bodies in our own country who have rejected the Word and Sacraments, driven out faithful pastors, and in doing so have driven out the Holy Spirit, and He's not coming back until the missionaries bearing Word and Sacrament.

**30.** The reason why this is a sin against the Holy Spirit is “ὅτι ἔλεγον Πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον ἔχει – because they said, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’” As of the time of this incident, neither Sacraments had been instituted, but the Word was there, in the flesh, the means for the Holy Spirit to work. Their rejection of that Word was a rejection of that Spirit.

We have spoken here previously about the idea of “spirit” being connected to life, and the lack of spirit = wind = breath bringing an end to life; i.e. death. In the Bible, you are either alive or you are dead, and these men fall into the latter category. These days, the gutted Jesus of liberal theology leaves all who believe it dead in their trespasses and sin.

That's all you get when you have an imperfect Jesus who rotted in a grave, Who does us no good, and a Bible that can't be believed, all of which they believe. Those are all blasphemous statements, and sadly that's just what much of the world teaches about Jesus and the Book that tells of Him. The faith of many has been destroyed by false teachers.

What's more, they who have gutted our religion not only think of themselves as Christian, but they think themselves better Christians than you strict and anal party-

pooping Missouri Synod Lutherans. Much of the hatred we feel these days from The World has its origin in the pulpits and classrooms of professed Christian who are dead.

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**31.** And now “Καὶ ἔρχονται ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ - His mother and His brothers arrived.” Many of the translations use the word “arrive,” and I like it. We have been told why they are coming to the place where He is, and now they have arrived. It appears that Jesus has a mother, and it is clear that He also has brothers and sisters.

Those brothers must have been sons of Mary, who apparently had daughters as well. In fact, Mark does not use proper names to describe these people, but he describes them by their relationship to Jesus; they are mother and brothers. By doing that, he calls attention to that relationship, emphasizing the relationships – which is the point - over the people.

That these were His actual relatives is clearly seen by what the crowd says in v. 32 and by how Jesus, in v. 33, responds to what the crowds say. That they were actual siblings is also clearly seen by the words used to describe them. The idea of the Perpetual Virginity developed from flawed theology, and ought to be rejected in Reformation churches.

But that very idea seems to be coming back – and with some with a vengeance – among some of the Lutherans, and I’m not sure exactly why. A lot of it comes from an almost slavish devotion to Martin Luther, who held to the Perpetual Virginity, and an obsession with the Lutheran Confessions, whose one proof text on this matter is sketchy at best.

Getting back to the Bible, it says that his relatives “καὶ ἔξω στήκοντες ἀπέστειλαν πρὸς αὐτὸν καλοῦντες αὐτόν – standing outside, sent to Him, calling Him.” The family sent somebody into the house to fetch Jesus, which was their express purpose for being there – as indicated in v. 21 – and that all the while they were “calling” to Him from outside.

The verb for “calling” is “καλοῦντες,” a participial form of a word that means to shout in a loud voice, or we might say to yell. It may well be that the family sent somebody into the house to get Jesus, and then stands outside yelling for Him to come out. But it could mean they sent others into the house so that those sent could do more effective yelling.

It seems much more likely that the family themselves were doing the actual yelling, like we often used to see on *COPS*. The commentaries don’t seem to know why they didn’t just go inside themselves, and neither do I. But we do know that people were packed into that house like sardines, and were there bouncers at the door to keep out the riff raff?

It does not say what they were saying, but we can well imagine. What would a mother say to her son, and what would brothers say to a brother in this situation. Had they had been standing outside of the house for some time, and His talk of “blasphemy,” directed at all their own pastors and religious leaders, was the straw that broke the camel’s back?

What is very clear is that Jesus is in opposition to those religious leaders, so much that He has accused them of “blasphemy.” It is equally clear that those leaders are in opposition to Him, so much so that some of whom accuse Him of possessing Satan, and others at this moment are plotting how to kill Him. To the fam, the whole thing is sheer madness.

**32.** Mark now tells us that “ἐκάθητο περὶ αὐτὸν ὄχλος – the crowd surrounded Him.” They are hanging on His every word, and you wonder if their “surrounding” Him is a protective posture. They hear the family of Jesus standing outside of the house yelling for Him to come out, and somebody comes in to take Him away, by force if necessary.

Those who were in the house and literally surrounding Jesus tell Him that His mother, brothers, and they add “ἀδελφαί σου – your sister” are “outside, and they are “ζητοῦσίν σε – looking for you.” That’s what *they* say. Whether or not Jesus had sisters is not very important one way or the other, but Jesus Himself says nothing about sisters being there.

When Jesus speaks in v. 33, He says nothing of sisters, but in v. 35, when speaking of His true kin, Christians, then He *does* speak of “sisters.” It seems then that Jesus had several brothers and at least one sister, which is not at all an unusual occurrence, and that of His true sisters – girl Christians – He has many. That too is not at all hard to understand.

**33 – 34.** He responds to their statement about family with a rhetorical question, “Τίς ἐστὶν ἡ μήτηρ μου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί – Who are my mother and brothers?” He looks around at those who are in a circle around Him, and declares, “Ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ μου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί μου – behold, my mother and my brothers,” and this is where your hearer comes in.

**35.** He continues, by way of explanation, again piling on verbiage, this time to emphasize the all-compassing *scope* of who is eligible to be His “brother, sister, and mother.” He says, “ὃς ἂν ποιήσῃ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ, οὗτος ἀδελφός μου καὶ ἀδελφὴ καὶ μήτηρ ἐστίν – Anybody who should do the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Noticeably omitted from the nuclear family is the Father. He speaks in other places about our common Father, and then He directs us to pray to Him. The Father is not mentioned but assumed, and the mother is the Church, and this couple continue to produce offspring, who carry on – often for generation after generation for many hundreds of years.

In churches that have retained the Word and Sacraments – and the two things follow one after another – and not sinned against the Holy Spirit by driving Him out, can see the Family continue on to the next generation every time somebody is baptized. Throw out the life giving spirit, and you are left only with death – until the missionaries come.

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## Law/Gospel

**Family/Family** – Our families are imperfect; imperfect fathers, mothers, and siblings. God the Father is perfect, and so is Jesus our brother, and our Mother nourishes us with pure doctrine, if not pure love. The rest of the family is in heaven, awaiting our arrival.

**No Forgiveness/Forgiveness** – With out the Holy Spirit and means, there is no forgiveness. With the Holy Spirit and means, there is forgiveness. We have the means – Word and Sacrament – and so we have forgiveness.

**Sin, Death, Satan/Forgiveness, Life, Jesus** – Satan brings sin to the world, and with sin comes death. Jesus brings forgiveness to the world, and with forgiveness comes life.

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### **Sermon Titles**

Man Holed Up in House – News at Ten

The Sin Against the Holy Spirit

The Family of God

Family Matters

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### **Hymns**

During the Pentecost Season, we can often sing hymns that are rather general in their subject matter that are just good hymns and that people like to sing. What do people like to sing? Start with you, and sing hymns that you like to sing, and then ask your wife which hymns she likes to sing. I used to put a little tear-off in the bulletin occasionally, asking people to write down which hymns they wanted to sing. In that way I found out which hymns they wanted to sing.

I did not take every suggestion every time, and if it's not in LBS then we're probably not going to sing it. Taking suggestions and acting on some of them will also serve as something of a preemptive strike against the formation of a hymn-picking committee. Picking hymns by committee? Let's not complicate this simple task.

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### **Resources**

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BCLY – William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*.. The Westminster Press, 1975

FGG – James W. Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*. Concordia Publishing House, 1993

MGM – W.F. Moulton, A.S. Geden, H.K. Moulton, *A Concordance to the Greek Testament*. T & T Clark LTD., 1978

MM – James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982

ODCC – F.L. Cross, Editor, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford University Press, 1978

RNK – Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Zondervan, 1976

RSV – Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, 1965

UBD – Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, 1977.

WP – A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Baker, 1930

VINE – W.E.Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984

WIK – [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

BIB – [www.biblos.com](http://www.biblos.com)

GBO – [www.greekbible.com](http://www.greekbible.com)

Digital Classics Library - [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu)

Internet Classics Library – [www.classics.mit.edu](http://www.classics.mit.edu)

Christian Classics Ethereal Library - [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)

Project Wittenberg - [www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html](http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html)